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THE LOCKED HEART; OR, SIR CARYL'S SACRIFICE.

BY CORINNE CUSHMAN,

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AY, FOR WHAT WAS CICELY FAYE OUT SO EARLY ON THE BEACH, ALONE? WHOM HAD SHE COME TO MEET?

The Locked Heart;

OR,
SIR CARYL'S SACRIFICE.

A Young Girl's Romance.

BY CORINNE CUSHMAN.

CHAPTER I.

A JEALOUS LOVER.

A FLOOD of golden moonlight poured down upon a long veranda, whose slender pillars were twined with jessamine and honeysuckle; not far away the broad glitter of the summer ocean; nearer at hand a smooth lawn sparkling with dew; a parterre of brilliant flowers showing lilies and roses almost as distinctly as if it were day instead of evening; a fountain flowering on its silver stem:—over all, and through all, the low boom of the sea on the shore and the soft rustle of wet leaves moving in the night wind. There were lights shining from the muslin-draped windows which opened on the veranda, the sound of a piano on which the bewitching waltzes of Chopin were being played, and the shadows of a number of persons moving about in the long drawing-room, with occasional bursts of silver laughter or the deeper tones of some manly voice; but none of these things had, for the present, any interest for the young gentleman and lady who were slowly pacing up and down the porch. The lady was very young and small and slight, not more than seventeen—a girl just out of school the previous May, and this was June. Her face was sometimes lifted and sometimes drooped as she clung to her companion's arm, who bent his stately head low to whisper the passionate words he had brought her out there in the golden moonlight to say to her. That face, when she raised it so that the light fell full upon it, was one of those girlish faces all bloom and sweetness, yet it had, too, more character than most at that age. The rosebud lips were set together in a line indicative of firmness, and the delicate brows had a spirited curve; but this only made her lovely features more bright and captivating. A pair of melting dark eyes looked out from the covert of long, thick, curling lashes. Those eyes and those lashes alone would have made Cicely Faye beautiful. Little tendrils and rings of soft brown hair clinging to her white forehead gave her a childlike, appealing look which contradicted the spirited curves of mouth and eyebrows. In her white summer dress, her heavy hair braided in a long braid down her back, her cheeks glowing with that ineffable bloom which only the daintiest roses can rival, she seemed a tender, confiding, soft little creature to be loved and cared for almost like a baby.

The man who walked beside her, pouring into her thrilled ear the first love-words to which she had ever listened, was Sir Caryl Crossley, a person who had the reputation of being a lady's man, by whose attentions all ladies felt flattered; a gentleman who had been reported "engaged" on numerous occasions, but who had reached the age of twenty-six without ever—so far as his friends knew—having had a very serious "*affaire de cœur*."

Cicely Faye had heard a great deal of gossip about him before she ever met him; even now, as he talked to her in a way that set her heart to throb wildly with delicious triumph and joy, she raised her bright eyes with a curious flush of doubt and inquiry in them, as if asking him if he were serious at last.

"How do I know whether or not to believe you?" she asked, after he had said a good many things very earnestly. "I have always heard of you as a flirt, Sir Caryl."

"Then you have heard me vilely slandered, Cicely Faye! I will tell you how far my flirtations have gone. I am rich and idle; I put my time at the disposition of such ladies, married or single, as desire to make use of it for their own amusement. I have never yet, I solemnly assure you, led a woman on to believe that I loved her; but I have allowed many women to lead me on, thinking I was in love with them. I have given play to their vanity, their artifice, their coquetry or their covetousness, so long as it amused them. Do you blame me for that, sweet little Cicely?"

"I hardly know," she stammered.

"And the reason I have seriously and solemnly made choice of you, after these years, as the one woman to ask to become my wife, is because you are pure and artless and innocent—a lily that has never been soiled by contact with mud and dust. You will be all my own! My own pure lily! No man before me has breathed words of

love in your ear. No man has clasped this dainty hand or pressed a kiss upon those sweet lips. Assure me this is so, darling Cicely! Has any other man ever made love to you, Cicely?"

"Never! never!"

"Ever kissed you?"

"Never!" indignantly

"Then, thus and now, I seal you for my own, precious Cicely."

Before she could make a movement of resistance he had pressed the kiss of betrothal upon the sacred bloom of those rosy lips.

"Now, Cicely, you will have to marry me! Now, I know you will some day be my little wife! Do you really love me, little witch! Tell me that you do! I am wild to hear you say it."

"I do not know enough about such matters to be sure," answered the silvery voice, while Cicely smiled mischievously to hide the soft confusion into which his kiss had betrayed her, "but I think I do. Are you satisfied with that, Sir Caryl?"

"Yes. And oh, a thousand thanks for saying it, my sweet! Will you call me Caryl?—leave off the ceremonious 'sir,' little Cicely."

The episode of the kiss over, they walked on again, up and down the flower-fragrant veranda, Caryl talking fast and low, the moon shining on the glittering ocean, the lovely earth, and on two faces bright with the strange, the ever-wonderful, the ever-new, the unexplainable rapture of young love.

"They will miss us, and wonder," Cicely pleaded more than once, but her lover would not put an end to the magic of this first hour of avowed love, until finally an elder sister came to the hall-door and called them, saying that they were wanted to make up a set of the Lancers.

"We are coming," answered Sir Caryl, gayly; then—when the intruder had retreated—seriously, to the young girl on his arm: "One moment, Cicely!—you are sure that I am your first and only choice?"

"Quite sure. Why I have been home from school but a month! What a jealous creature you will be!"

"I have heard of girls carrying on serious flirtations or love-affairs at school, Cicely. I merely wish to assure myself that *my* future wife has never thus lowered herself."

"You will have to take my word for it, Sir Caryl." The bright eyes flashed, the rose-leaf lips quivered, the light little hand was withdrawn from his arm.

"There, there, little one! Come back to me! You must forgive me, but I have had, perhaps, a sadder experience than most men. I want no one ever to have had the slightest claim on you. I want you all my own. But I will say no more about it. I love you so madly, with all the long-repressed power and passion of a strong nature, that it will kill me if anything ever happens to make me really jealous of you. You would be almost afraid of me, little one, if you knew how much I love you, how much I trust you, how terrible would be my disappointment if anything ever came between us. Nothing ever must—ever shall happen, to cause me to distrust you, my angel! Come! they will wonder at our lingering."

They joined the gay group in the drawing-room, where dancing, singing, playing, chatting made the evenings spent in that old country-house down by the sea pass so pleasantly. There were several pretty girls there, and a recently-married sister of Cicely's, but none of them could approach in positive beauty the charms of the pet of the household, sweet Cicely, youngest daughter and most fondly-loved of all. And so sweet, so artless, so unconscious of her great fascination was Cicely Faye, that girls older and less popular could hardly be jealous of her.

Her sweet face wore a dreamy look of happiness the remainder of that eventful evening; yet, when midnight came, and she was alone in her moonlighted chamber, an expression of care settled down over its radiance, and she heaved a heart-breaking sigh.

"If Caryl should ever hear of that!" she whispered, as she stood by her window and stared up at the blue dome with troubled eyes.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECRET TRYST.

A few days of delight followed on. Sir Caryl had gone to Captain Faye with his suit for the hand of his daughter and been accepted. The family were well pleased; and as Sir Caryl had no one to consult but himself, on his side, the course of true love promised, for once, to run smooth. Sir Caryl had a large estate in that part of the country. When he kept bachelor's

hall at all, it was at Cliff Castle, a century-old house built on the cliffs overlooking the sea—a great house with a square tower that no winds from the ocean could even shake. There were magnificent grounds about it; a high stone wall kept off much of the sea-breeze; and the view of wide down and wider seas were very fine.

Captain Faye, an officer retired on half-pay, had purchased his home, quite near the water, and dubbed it the "Rookery" only about two years before. His wife's money had paid for the place, after which she had enough left to add much to their comfort; otherwise his income would not have afforded them all the elegance and even luxury of their style of living. Captain Faye's eldest brother was a lord; and Captain Faye's daughter was, in birth, a suitable match for a baronet.

Cliff Castle and the Rookery were only about a mile apart, both of them close to the sea. Beneath the cliffs was a smooth, safe beach, so that it was possible, when the tide was out—and even when it was in, unless unusually stormy—to make one's way from one place to the other by the sands. There was no place in all England more delightful than this mile-long strip of beach, take it by sunset or moonrise, or any time of night or day, and it was a favorite haunt of visitors to both country-seats. The hottest June morning was breezy and comfortable there.

Perhaps there was nothing strange in the fact that Sir Caryl arose a full hour earlier, the last morning in June, than had been his custom. His love for Cicely Faye was a passion so new and so eventful that it kept him as restless as he was happy. Half a dozen young fellows, from some of the best families of the country, were staying with him at the castle, having left London but a few days since; he knew, however, that none of them would think of coming down to breakfast before ten o'clock—they had all been up late, to a small dancing-party given by Mrs. Faye for their benefit the previous evening—and it was now barely seven; and Sir Caryl, thinking of Cicely, and of how lovely she had looked when she bade him good-night, softly opened a window of the breakfast-room and strolled out on the dewy lawn. The air was close and sultry, promising a scorching day. A breath of salt air reached his nostrils, luring him to the winding-path which led down to the sea, dimpling in the morning light. Here all was cool and fresh; he strolled on and on, inhaling the delicious odor of the brine, and dreaming of that pure and artless girl whom he was teaching to love him.

A delicious reverie held him in its thrall. He knew that the Rookery was not far away, though the low cliffs shut it from his sight. So near to her he loved—her he thought to be quietly sleeping in her airy chamber, dreaming of him—he yet seemed alone with the great sea and sky. His love, in that solitary hour, grew to be a solemn, wonderful matter.

There was a ledge of rock on which Cicely and he had sat for an hour the previous afternoon. Long streamers of ivy and other vines, planted by the Fayses, hung down from the earth above, partially screening the little nook which Cicely had playfully named "Boffin's Bower." Sir Caryl climbed up to the ledge, seated himself to rest, and to watch a far vessel whose white sails, rosy with the risen sun, were just coming up on the horizon from the under world.

He had been seated here a few minutes when he heard a light footstep on the damp sands beneath, and leaning over, he looked down, and, to his great surprise, saw Cicely walking there alone. His first impulse was to call out to her and then puzzle her, by withdrawing his head, so that she would not perceive him. Then followed, before he had done this, a second impulse to watch her for a little, while she was unconscious of his presence.

What a dear, sweet, innocent little thing she was!

What beautiful hair!—for it was unbraided, as he had never before seen it, and rippled below her waist, catching the light on its waves until the brown threads turned to gold.

How blessed was he above all other men to be the first to win the devotion of such a nature! How the fellows admired her, and envied him, last night!

Had she, like her lover, been unable to sleep from pure happiness?

How she would start and dimple and flush when he breathed her name! He leaned over to call her. Something in the expression of that young face struck him as singular—it was not a happy one. Cicely was crying! Tears were streaming down her cheeks, and she was looking anxiously, eagerly forward, as if expecting some one.

A chill crept over the warmth of Sir Caryl's mood.

His jealous, suspicious nature had been the curse of a life which should have been most fortunate and prosperous.

Ay, for what was Cicely Faye out so early on the beach, alone? Whom had she come to meet? His heart stood still.

He was not kept long in suspense.

Out from behind a rock stretching closer to the sea than others glided a man. Cicely gave a little cry when she saw him. He was young, graceful, handsome as an angel. He stood there, waiting, holding out his arms, and Cicely ran straight into them. Cicely twined her arms about his neck, and kissed him over and over, fondly, passionately. Cicely—Cicely, who had assured Sir Caryl that never man but him had breathed a breath of love over the bloom of her young life! Had she not vowed to him that a man had never pressed his lips to her own? Yet she clung to this young fellow, drew his head down on her shoulder, and there the two stood and whispered together, Cicely every moment looking anxiously around as if afraid of being observed—of being detected in this clandestine acquaintanceship.

Oh, it was shameful! it was nothing less than the vilest deceit! Sir Caryl's heart broke from the thrall where it was held motionless for a long minute, and beat and thundered against his side in great shocks that shook his very being, as the sea shook the shore when it beat against it in some furious storm.

How could he look upon that sight and live? He had given that girl the long-kept treasures of his faith and love—given them freely, fully, fondly—poured out at her small feet the lavish riches of a nature that had long been hoarded for one like her.

Oh, base and ruinous deceit!

His dark face blanched with wrath, his brows drawn together, his lips cut by the unconscious pressure of his teeth, his eyes contracted and emitting rays of sullen light, Sir Caryl—usually so gay and debonnaire—was not a pleasant person to look upon during that fifteen minutes. If he had found his revolver near at hand this unknown rival might not have lived to leave the sands.

It was evident that the interview between Cicely and the stranger was stolen and secret—that she avoided observation—that the man was in haste to get off before intruders might chance upon the beach. He gave Cicely a letter which she hid in her bosom. Then, with a few more murmured words and another ardent embrace the two separated, the young gentleman hurrying away in the direction from which he came, soon being lost to sight behind the rocks from where he had emerged, while Cicely walked up and down a few moments as if struggling to calm herself, and regain her ordinary expression before being seen by others.

It had been the full purpose of Sir Caryl to rush down and appear before her, overwhelming her with the scorn and contempt which raged in his breast; but that very rage was so overpowering that he struggled vainly with himself for power to move or speak. Before he could sufficiently control himself to descend the rocks and deal with her as she deserved, Cicely had disappeared.

For an hour or more Sir Caryl remained on the cliff, suffering such torments as only the cruel skill of jealousy can devise. As he grew calmer he began to realize that there possibly might be some explanation of the scene he had witnessed. It might be, for instance, that Cicely had a brother, who had committed some crime for which he was obliged to keep in hiding, but whom she still loved and sought to aid though he was outlawed by his family.

Yet he had never heard of any disgraceful episode as staining the fair fame of the Fays. He had never heard of any brother, except the one who was now an officer out in Canada—a man far older than this fair-faced, silken-mustached youth who had held Cicely in his passionate embrace. There were two married sisters, one at home with the family at present, the other living in London in fine style, her husband the wealthy Lord Fairfax. This fellow was neither of the brothers-in-law.

No doubt he was some poor parti with whom Cicely had fallen in love when away at school, and who, either because he was of a low family, or was "fast," or in some way unworthy, dared not pursue his suit openly. Oh, what a base, what a worldly nature Cicely must have, to accept his attentions, because he was the rich baronet, the owner of Cliff Castle, while her heart was fixed on this handsome youngster! She was willing to be the wife of Sir Caryl Crossley, of Cliff Castle, while she gave her love to this unknown gallant. She had raised her sweet eyes calmly and clearly to meet his gaze when he had questioned her if ever she had indulged in a

school-girl romance, and had denied it! Perhaps, if she had then confessed and repented he might have been fool enough to forgive her—but, now! Ah! what a choking, strangling sigh oppressed him!

Sir Caryl arose and went feebly down to the beach. The sun still shone, the dimpling waves threw up their diamonds, but all was dark and wretched to his eyes. He looked at his watch; it was after nine: he must be making his way home.

"Sir Caryl, are you ill?" was his valet's inquiry, as he reached the house and went to his room.

And that was the question repeated to him by each guest as he came into the breakfast-room—"Are you ill, Sir Caryl?" And the baronet was driven to making a woman's reply:

"Only a headache."

He laughed and jested in a wild kind of way, all the time so pale and gloomy between his efforts to be gay that his guests understood him to be making a brave endeavor to entertain them, and begged him not to mind them in the least, but to take care of himself, and not to allow himself to fall sick, not to fret about them, they would amuse themselves, to return to bed and sleep off his headache, to send for a physician, and so forth, and so forth.

Finally he induced them all to go off for a day's sail on his yacht—all, save Harley St. Cyr, the oldest of the set, a gentleman of thirty or more, and generally the leader of every enterprise, but who, to-day, declared he abominated yachting, and was going to remain home and nurse his friend.

St. Cyr was the only one of his six or seven visitors about whom Sir Caryl felt any doubts as to introducing him to the ladies. Not that St. Cyr was tabooed in the fashionable society of London; on the contrary, he was a prime favorite there; but he was known to be unscrupulous in the pursuit of pleasure, and also to obtain much of the money with which he was enabled to live in the most luxurious manner by winning it at cards from younger men. This gentleman Sir Caryl had felt some regret in taking to the Rookery, but could not avoid it seeing that he went there every day with other guests. He had apologized privately to Mrs. Faye, saying that St. Cyr was not of immaculate character, yet was a good fellow in his way, who had rather forced an intimacy in London and invited himself to Cliff Castle.

"He is a very great favorite, I assure you, Mrs. Faye; and you need not be troubled about his getting me into scrapes, for I never gamble, and am old enough to be on my guard. Since he is my guest I have to bring him here, where you are good enough to be civil to him; but, remember, I do not indorse him."

This was the understanding which existed about Harley St. Cyr. It had seriously vexed Sir Caryl, the previous evening, to have this visitor so attentive to his own little rosebud of a sweetheart. Once St. Cyr had taken Cicely out on the porch, where they had promenaded for some time, talking earnestly together.

On this wretched morning it annoyed Sir Caryl to hear this man, of all others, declare his intention of remaining at home. He desired to ride over to the Rookery and have an interview, alone, with Cicely. He said to himself that he would be calm, would be reasonable, be just, be generous, but that Cicely must give him a satisfactory explanation of the scene he had witnessed on the beach, or he would fling his troth in her face and quit her forever. Not that he expected she could clear herself. He had thought of many improbable reasons for that rendezvous, but none that would or could account for it. That she was like all the rest of them, a flirt and a fortune-hunter, he made up his mind.

When the fellows, with baskets of luncheon and wine, were off for the yacht, Sir Caryl said rather coldly to St. Cyr that, since he chose not to join the expedition, he must make way with the day as best he could—to excuse him, as he should be compelled to retire to his room. St. Cyr good-naturedly responded that he should not find the day dull, begging his host to put him to some service.

"Let me bathe your head for you in *eau de Cologne*, or go for the doctor, or do something, my dear fellow."

"Thank you, Harley; there is nothing to be done."

So St. Cyr strolled into the smoking-room and his host went to his chamber. He could not bear his own misery, shut up in that solitude. Stealing out to the stables, so as to avoid his guest, he ordered a horse and rode, in the burning sun, over to the Rookery. The spacious old house looked charmingly cool and inviting as he rode up the avenue of limes and dismounted. Yesterday he had been so happy there! It

seemed to him that he was laboring with a hideous nightmare—that presently he would awake and find all a dream. A servant approached and took his horse; he stepped across the breezy piazza, entered the wide hall, whose doors stood invitingly open, and went on to the door of the drawing-room, where he tapped, but received no answer. Hearing voices within, he entered without further ceremony.

The married sister, Lady Graham, sat by one of the windows, looking very pretty in her blue morning-dress, her white fingers busy with a mass of bright-colored silks.

"Ah, Sir Caryl," she cried, gayly, as he entered. "You are come just in time to hold the skeins for me!"

The new-comer walked over toward her, but stopped in the middle of the room, while a sudden, burning flush rushed over his pale face; he had caught sight of St. Cyr just leading Cicely to the piano in the music-room, which opened out of the drawing-room.

"Cicely," called her sister, "here is Sir Caryl, after all!"

Cicely turned, and her serious face lighted up with such a look of pleasure, as she came quickly forward, smiling and blushing, to greet her lover, that the dark frown of suspicion smoothed itself out a little. But, not entirely. She saw there was something wrong, and her mobile countenance changed again as she looked up at him apprehensively.

"You are ill," she said, tenderly, "St. Cyr told me you were! Yet, when I saw you come in, I began to hope it was nothing."

"It is nothing—nothing at all!—a slight headache. I did not know—he did not inform me—how he was about to amuse himself. I am no longer surprised that he refused the pleasure of yachting."

He spoke with such cold sarcasm that a choking sensation arose in Cicely's throat as she looked at him in surprise. He returned her regard by a fierce stare into the blushing face. What a sweet face it was! What a pure, girlish face! With what assumption of innocence she bore his scrutiny, keeping her eyes fixed on him with a wistful, wondering look!

"I am certain you are more ill than you will confess," she said, gently.

There was a wicked smile on St. Cyr's lips as he came forward.

"I found it so stupid after you went to your room, Caryl, that I bethought me to pay my respects to the ladies."

"So I see."

"Could I have done anything better?"

"Oh, certainly not! St. Cyr knows how to get the most out of a dull day."

Harley St. Cyr, laughing in his sleeve, offered to hold the silk for Lady Graham while she wound it.

CHAPTER III.

A MAN'S ANGER AND A WOMAN'S SCORN.

"WILL you come out on the porch, Miss Faye?—the air in the house is oppressive."

Cicely, wondering more and more at her fiancé's stern looks, walked out with him onto the veranda where they paced up and down for some minutes in silence, she peering anxiously up at him now and then, asking herself if a headache could make Sir Caryl so gloomy.

At last he paused as far from the open windows as the porch would take them, and faced her darkly.

"Cicely, I have something of importance to say to you. When I told you, the other night, that I loved you, and asked for your heart in return, you assured me that I was your first and only choice."

"Well, Sir Caryl, I really do not like to flatter you so much, but I told you the truth then," she answered him, playfully, the sweet color creeping up to her white forehead even to admit as much as that.

"Cicely! Do not trifle with me! For God's sake, be serious and candid, if it is in you to be. But, it is not. You are like the rest. Cicely Faye, I accuse you, to your own sweet eyes, of treachery."

"Treachery!" she dropped his hand which she had timidly taken and drew away from him with wide, flashing eyes.

"I was on the cliffs this morning at eight o'clock; I was sitting in our 'Boffin's Bower,' dreaming happy dreams of you, and I saw the interview which took place on the beach!—saw all—the meeting and parting."

The indignant eyes drooped before his stern ones; a burning blush wrapped bosom, cheeks and brow as in a rosy flame, then died away, leaving her deadly white.

"You are silent, Miss Faye."

"I have no explanation to give, Sir Caryl. Except this," she added, looking him straight in

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the eyes, "that there was nothing wrong in itself or false to you in that interview. I cannot tell you about it. The secret of another is wrapped up in it. Yet I will swear to you, dear Caryl, that there was no treachery to you in that meeting."

"I will give you the benefit of a doubt for the present. Answer me this: was that person I saw you with a brother, a cousin, or any relative of your family which would give him a right to your caresses?"

"No relative at all," was the slow, unwilling answer.

"And you refuse to account to me for the intimacy between you?"

"Caryl, cannot you trust me? Have you no faith in me, as a woman?—no belief in my solemn attestation?"

"Faith and trust may be strong, but the evidence of my senses is stronger. I saw you in the arms of another man; you will not explain to me how such a thing may be possible and yet you be innocent of evil, and true to me. Under such circumstances you cannot become my wife."

"Nothing on earth would tempt me to marry a man who could not believe me innocent, on my oath, against all appearances. Let me be the one to say our engagement is broken, Sir Caryl. Let me add, that I did not demand from you a sworn certificate that you had never made love to, never kissed any other woman! I took you as you were. But, that is past!"—her voice and lips quivered, she burst into passionate tears; but the fire in her proud eyes soon dried them.

Sir Caryl was walking about and about like a madman. He paused to say:

"I do not wish to injure you in any way, Miss Faye. I shall not reveal the cause of our quarrel. I leave it to you to make your own explanations to your family. I have the greatest respect for your father and mother; I should be sorry to wound their feelings. I pray that you may be more discreet in future, and so save them trouble."

"You insult me, sir; and I have no redress."

"You can go to your father if you wish to resent what I say."

Cicely was silent. There were reasons why she could not complain of Sir Caryl to her father—the same reasons which forbade her explaining her conduct to her lover. Her bosom heaved with indignation; the grief she would otherwise have suffered was for the moment swallowed up in resentment. Her companion regarded her half-scornfully.

"I will obey your instructions," he said, sneeringly—"go to your parents with our disagreement, or keep it quiet for the present."

Cicely hesitated. Warring emotions contended within her. She felt how much color such a decision would lend to his suspicions—that she compromised herself in doing it—yet she put down her pride and said, humbly:

"I would prefer you to not speak of it for a few days, Sir Caryl."

He bowed and offered her his arm. She took it, and they returned to the drawing-room together, where he politely found her a seat, and then retired from her, and fell to chatting with Lady Graham. It would seem as if the very contempt he had for Cicely gave him strength to play his part. He avowed his headache much better, and entered into a sprightly discussion of the fashions with the lady.

Poor Cicely sat for a few moments where he had placed her, feeling as if she had been dead and buried and was struggling back to a horrible sense of life in her coffin. With some tact he had placed her where she was free from her sister's eye; but St. Cyr, who was turning over music at the piano, knew there had been "a lover's quarrel," smilingly flattering himself that he was the cause of it.

Still and white as a statue Cicely sat there; but when she heard the man who had been her lover carelessly chatting as if nothing had occurred, her indomitable pride came to her rescue; two great roses of richest carmine bloomed out in her ashen cheeks, and walking over to the piano she sat down before it, and looking up at St. Cyr with brilliant eyes which seemed to smile, she asked him what she should sing for him, and burst into a gay little love-song. The thrill of pain which ran through the warbling notes only made her singing the more delicious; so that St. Cyr called for another and another song, while Sir Caryl, now mute with jealous anger, tangled more and more hopelessly the threads of Lady Graham's embroidery.

Lady Graham invited the two gentlemen to stay to luncheon; they declined, and soon went away. Before leaving, Cicely took occasion to hastily write a few words on a scrap of paper

which she slipped into St. Cyr's hand as she took it, in saying good-morning.

Sir Caryl saw the whole maneuver; but, as he said to himself, it could not give him a worse opinion of her than he had before, though the sight struck to his heart like the blow of a dagger.

The two walked back to Cliff Castle, leaving Sir Caryl's horse to be sent for, since St. Cyr had come over across the downs on foot.

His host was not very talkative on the way home, a fact which only amused the gentleman, who felt certain that jealousy of his superior attractions had put Sir Caryl in ill-humor. He resolved to still further arouse this jealousy; so, going on a little in advance, he contrived to drop the scrap of paper he had received from Miss Faye.

The miserable man who followed saw the paper in the path and picked it up. Would it be dishonorable to read it? He hesitated only an instant. He must know what that pure-faced girl who had so enchanted him, had to say secretly to this fast young gentleman whose acquaintance she had made but a few days ago! His stealthy glance ran over the paper and then he thrust the scrap into his vest-pocket. The words ran:

"Will Harley St. Cyr be on the sands at nine this evening?"

"Two flirtations on hand in one day! Pretty well, for a girl of seventeen! I will never think of her again," sneered the lover who had discarded her, and he hastened on to join his visitor, to whom he now made himself most agreeable.

When the guests at Cliff Castle returned from their day on the sea, they found a sumptuous dinner awaiting their keen appetites, and a courtly host who had entirely recovered from his morning's headache.

"Are we to make our party-call at Captain Faye's this evening?" asked one.

"St. Cyr and I have been over once to-day. I believe some of the ladies there have an engagement for this evening," answered Sir Caryl, and then St. Cyr knew for certain that the scrap of paper had been read, and looked up at his host and laughed good-naturedly.

The engagement of Sir Caryl Crossley to Miss Cicely Faye was not yet announced outside of the captain's family; none of the visitors at Cliff Castle were positive about it, although they suspected that such would be the result of Sir Caryl's devotion to Miss Faye.

Therefore St. Cyr was not absolutely certain that he was playing an ill-part toward his host, in strolling away from the rest of the company and going down on the beach that evening; but he was sure enough of it to make his act one of treachery after all.

Sir Caryl, as he expected, missed him from the billiard-room, where they had all gone after dinner. He had resolved not to watch, follow, or in any manner interfere with the strange whims of Miss Faye. Yet a rope of sand is not more easily broken than was his resolution when he found St. Cyr actually gone. A gust of fury laid low his new-formed purposes. Leaping out of one of the windows of the billiard-room, he hurried to the path which led down to the shore.

The beach, when he reached it, was wearing one of its finest aspects. The sea was as still as it ever can be; a saffron belt ran around the horizon; the planet of love burned and throbbed in silver radiance in the midst of that yellow ring left by the sunset. The prolonged twilight of June had hardly yet made its appearance, although it was nine o'clock. An amber light flooded the air like a softer day.

Sir Caryl pulled the hat from his fevered forehead as he almost ran along the sands beaten hard and smooth by the tide.

He wanted to meet those two together—to pass them with a smile of superb contempt—to wither that wicked girl under the glance of his disdainful eye; and he constantly held down the tiger of revenge that stirred in his nature, that he might be calm and contemptuous.

Oh, Cicely Faye, that girl of the pure brow and the sweet eyes, was a thing too mean even for his contempt. Thank Heaven, he had found her out in time!

Yet, though he walked straight on toward that spot on the sands where he had seen Cicely that morning, he was too late to surprise her at the second rendezvous. The jutting rock was between him and that place, when some one came walking rapidly toward him from that other side of the cliff where he longed to be.

The man walked, ran a little way, walked and ran again in a distracted way which caught the attention of the other.

As the two men approached each other the baronet saw that this was St. Cyr, hatless, and evidently much agitated. The saffron light on

his pale face gave it a ghastly look; he was shaking; his teeth chattered when he stopped to speak to Sir Caryl.

"I'm not dressed warm enough. The sea-air is cold," he muttered, not looking his friend in the eye. "It was so warm in the house, I thought I would try the beach. I think I have taken a chill."

"Let us run back to the castle, then; and I will have something hot prepared for you, Harley."

They hastened back home together.

"Let me go to my room," pleaded St. Cyr; "I don't feel like meeting the fellows."

"Very well. I will send up the butler with a hot punch; and come up pretty soon, myself, to see how you are getting on."

The servant took up the punch; but when the master knocked at his guest's door a little later, there was no response, and not knowing what condition Harley might be in, he entered the room without ceremony. St. Cyr was not in it. He looked about; then sat down by the dressing-table, on which a couple of candles were burning.

"He will return soon, I suppose; I will wait for him."

Then his glance, roving over the table, rested on a note addressed to himself, which he hastily opened to read:

"I am called to London very suddenly. Thought, by running, I might reach the 10 o'clock train. Please send luggage to my rooms there, and excuse hasty departure. Friend ill."

"Yours, as ever,

"HARLEY."

This was written with a shaking hand, evidently, for the reader could hardly make out the brief scrawl.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF A TRAGEDY.

In a certain Cathedral-town some thirty miles back from the sea in the same county with Cliff Castle and the Rookery, inclosed in high brick walls which ran around an entire square, and over the cap of which branched the trees and tall shrubs within, stood a large, old-fashioned building, three stories in height, with plentiful windows. A semicircular device over the arched doorway bore the legend, in gilt on a blue ground: "MISS WOOLSON'S FINISHING SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES." If it had been a prison, instead of a school, the place would hardly have been made more secure. There were spikes along the top of the walls about the grounds; the imposing front gateway was closed with a solid gate always locked, except at the moment when the portress in the little lodge near by answered the ring of the bell and admitted visitor or supplies. There was a smaller gate, or rather door, in the rear wall, to which only two trusted servants had keys besides Miss Woolson's own self.

But the grounds within the inclosure were ample and pleasant, with broad walks for exercise, and benches under the stately trees, also a few flower-beds kept in order by the kitchen-gardener. All the flowers that could have been crowded into that square would not have made it so bright as the presence of the throngs of pretty young creatures who fluttered there, sweet as pinks and roses, restless and gay as butterflies, impatiently biding their time of imprisonment, longing to spread the wings of experience and try their powers in that wonderful, bewitching world that lay outside. Ah! when they were done with French verbs and five-finger exercises, with deportment, and that Grand Galop de Concert, and painting flowers from life, what fine times they were going to have!

Life, beyond that tedious period, was a beautiful, intoxicating whirl of gayety—of dressing, of dancing, of being admired and receiving offers! Even the plain ones and the poor genteel ones had their dreams; while the rich and beautiful, who were flattered even in school, allowed their fancy to run riot in the golden fields of the future.

Of all the young ladies in the school perhaps Cicely Faye was the most general favorite. Her father was not so wealthy as some, yet he was far from poor; her mother belonged to a distinguished family; there were lords and ladies on both sides; and Cicely was sweet, lovely, generous, ingenuous—a warm-hearted, beautiful girl, with whom even the envious could not find fault. Miss Woolson was proud of her; her schoolmates adored her. Especially was she idolized by Dolores Leon, the great heiress of the school, daughter of the great West Indian merchant whose house-of-business was one of the heaviest in all London.

Dolores was a high-tempered, imperious, pas-

THE LOCKED HEART.

sionate creature, giving the teachers and the dignified head of the establishment worlds of trouble; but to Cicely she was always humbly devoted, taking her advice even when it was bitter as gall to her haughty disobedience. The two girls roomed together. They walked together during those afternoon parades when the young ladies marched, two and two, for half an hour, up and down the dully respectable street of the fine old Cathedral-town on which the Finishing School was located. Miss Woolson liked to have this pair head the charming procession, since their style and beauty were supposed to redound to her credit.

And, indeed, it would have been hard to find two handsomer girls in the whole United Kingdom. Dolores had great black brilliant eyes, a rich olive complexion, a splendid bloom and a graceful carriage; her friend was fair as a jas-mine-flower, with soft hazel eyes and sunny brown hair.

Could the poor sub-teacher who led and guided the fair company help it if, on this particular autumn—the last before that May on which Cicely left school—a certain fine-looking, well-dressed gentleman made it his business to stand on a corner of the street while the students marched by, boldly looking his admiration of the two who walked composedly behind her?

No! she certainly could not! Her withering glance of scorn, her scowl of indignation, passed unheeded. He was indifferent to her displeasure. Day after day he carried on this one-sided flirtation with her charge. Sometimes he would contrive to meet and pass the dimpling procession, twice or thrice in a single promenade.

As the lady remarked, in commenting on his conduct to her pupils, such a man must have little to do—must be an idler, an aimless, silly being, to thus trifle away his time!

Who was he? Miss Woolson, to whom his behavior was reported, finally ascertained that he was a Londoner, stopping in the vicinity for a few weeks of the autumn, that his name was St. Cyr, that his profession was the pursuit of pleasure, that he was a man of fashion and leisure—in short, a very dangerous person!

So it came about that the daily afternoon walk was resigned—being the only way to shake off this impudent fellow—that the spirits of the fair pupils suffered in consequence, except those of the two belles, who gained in bloom and had brighter eyes than ever!

"He has done no harm with his *beau yeux*, after all," thought Miss Woolson, observing the high spirits of Misses Faye and Leon. "I wonder which one of the two it was he tried to attract?"

Alas! comedies and tragedies have been played in boarding-schools before and since, nor the vigilant head any the wiser until the *dénouement* came!

The weeks flitted on, bringing the Christmas vacation. Cicely wrote home, obtaining permission to accept her friend's invitation to spend the holidays with her, in her father's London home. Dolores was wild with delight at being able to take Cicely with her. Neither of them expected anything more than stolen glances at the gay world, as they were still school-girls—stolen glances, such as they could gain from visits to the opera and drives in the park; and there were shops and people and amusement enough in the great city for two unsophisticated young girls.

For one of the two there was happiness, there was heaven in London—for St. Cyr was there! He had told her, by means of surreptitious notes, conveyed to her by a traitorous servant, heavily bribed, where he would meet them when they came to town; in what promenades he would be found—what theaters he would attend—what nights he would give to opera—what picture-galleries, on certain mornings, he would visit.

And so the secret acquaintance was improved; so a fond, foolish, ignorant, innocent girl was led on; until, a day or two before the holidays expired, one of the two girls went out alone one morning—leaving the other engrossed with the dressmaker up-stairs—went out from friends and security without one dismal foreboding—hurried to the next street-corner, flushed as she looked for the person awaiting her there, allowed him to place her in the ready carriage, was driven to an obscure church, in a distant part of the city, was led into its chilly gloom and up to the altar, where a few hastily-mumbled words from the lips of a young man in a gown, the pressure of a ring on her finger, the signing of a name in a great book by her poor little trembling hand changed her from a gay and thoughtless girl into the wife of Harley St. Cyr!

No sooner married than parted, for that day. The carriage took her back over the long way,

while the man she adored, for whom she would have done anything, went off in a different direction—for the marriage was to be kept a profound secret for the present.

Pale, frightened, chilled, now that he was no longer by her side to thrill her with tender promises, the poor, foolish young wife went back to her friends and took her seat at the luncheon-table without one of them suspecting that she had been out of the house.

The next day but one the friends returned to school. They were followed not long after; but St. Cyr no longer showed himself on the street when the lovely procession marched out for its day's exercise. He was discretion itself. He was in the town on business for himself. He took no interest in the ladies; he was a confirmed bachelor.

But, the poor old woman who kept the gate which shut out the Finishing School from the world, was filling a cracked teapot with the rich bribes which passed into her hands from a certain visitor who was admitted to her lodge frequently, and there had stolen interviews with the one pupil in whom he was most interested.

"Poor young things!" said this good old woman to herself. "Since they're married safe and sound, 'twould be a pity to keep 'em apart. 'Tain't my fault they got married clandestinely; 'twas done afore I were told! I'm minded to let 'em see each other all I can. If it gits found out on me, why, I'm tired of the place, anyways, an' they've promised to provide for me as long as I live. My, my! what a sweet, pretty poplin she gave me, las' week! 'Twill last till I'm buried in it."

So the hidden undercurrent of affairs ran on, until, early in March, the whole school was surprised, and Cicely shocked and distressed, by news which came to Dolores to the effect that her father had failed, through the pressure of the unprecedented hard times and the failure of other firms indebted to him—had "burst all to pieces," as the papers said, and wanted his daughter to come home immediately, to go with him to the West Indies, whither he was obliged to hasten, to try to save something out of the wreck of his business there.

Poor, proud, passionate Dolores was torn, almost in convulsions, from the neck of her sobbing friend, and carried away to the train, after only half a day spent in packing; and Cicely Faye was left alone, feeling as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her very feet.

All the pupils declared to each other, confidentially, that Cicely did not appear like the same girl after Dolores Leon went away. For their parts, they were not so sorry to part with that high-tempered young lady; but Cicely took it strangely to heart. Cicely had her room all to herself after that, and made a confidant of no one.

Even after she went home to the Rookery—that charming old place which now belonged to her father, and which the whole family thought the dearest old house that ever was—Cicely did not look well or act natural.

Gradually, however, this melancholy, which hung as softly about her sparkling young beauty, as the morning mist about an opening rose, wore away in the sunlight of June. There were gay guests coming and going all the time at the Rookery—several pleasant neighbors—and above all, Cliff Castle, with its young and agreeable owner, who was not long in showing Cicely Faye that he looked upon her with an admiring interest. How rapidly this admiration had deepened into a strong love, we know; it surprised no one so much as Sir Caryl, himself—Sir Caryl, the skeptic, the trifler, who for years had laughed at other men! Sir Caryl, the passionate, the jealous, who, now that he had chosen the "queen rose of the rosebud garden," would fain prevent other eyes from even coveting the sweet prize. Sir Caryl, the proud, the fastidious, who had so soon to come upon proofs of shameful perfidy.

Very little sleep came to the eyes of the baronet the night of the abrupt departure of his guest, St. Cyr. He could not believe that Harley had received a telegram—none of the servants knew of the arrival of any message—and it would have been strange for one to have gone to the beach, where St. Cyr had gone very privately. No! something had occurred during that interview to which he had been invited by Cicely Faye. The man had looked distraught beyond description when the baronet encountered him on the sands.

Had Cicely been fooling St. Cyr as she had fooled him? Had those velvet lips, those winning eyes been used to draw another heart to its ruin? Was St. Cyr in love with Cicely?—he, the scoffer at women, the gambler? Had Cicely led him on, and then jilted him?

"She is capable of it!" the baronet said to himself, bitterly. "Ought I not to have known that the sweetest lips are ever the falsest—the most heavenly eyes the most perfidious—the purest-seeming girl, with the smile of a child, the wickedest! Ay, I did know it! But Cicely, Cicely Faye, you lured me to doubt my own knowledge!—you completely befooled me!"

"Well, I have had enough of it! No more dreams of a dear and pure and lovely wife for me! Cliff Castle shall never echo to the thrilling music of my wife's voice. I will close up the grand old hall, and betake myself to roaming the world again. And, another thing, Cicely Faye! You have destroyed in me the respect and devotion to your sex which my mother taught me! No mercy will I have now upon any of you. If you throw yourselves in my way I shall not spare you!"

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOOM OF ANOTHER ROSE.

The FAYES, all but poor Cicely, wondered a little why Sir Caryl had not spent the preceding evening at the Rookery. Lady Graham guessed there had been a lovers' quarrel by Cicely's pale and troubled looks; but that it would prove anything serious she did not apprehend, until after Captain Faye received a note from Cliff Castle, which he did before luncheon of that day.

Opening it, he read, with immeasurable surprise:

"CLIFF CASTLE, Wednesday, June 27th.

"To CAPTAIN W. F. FAYE:

"My DEAR SIR: My relations to your daughter Cicely are broken off, at her desire. For particulars you will please go to the lady. My feelings toward you and your family are of the most friendly character, and I sincerely hope yours will remain so toward me. I leave this part of England to-morrow. Harley St. Cyr left my house last night, for London.

"With the highest esteem I remain,

"Very truly yours,

"CARYL CROSSLEY."

Captain Faye, who, though a very indulgent parent, had the high temper with which officers who have served in India usually return, sent for his daughter after reading this formal note.

She came in, pale as death, unable to look him in the face.

"Read that, Miss Cicely."

She took the note in her trembling hand and glanced over it.

"Is that all fair and square, my girl? If it is not, I am still young enough to give the scoundrel a horsewhipping."

"It is all fair, papa. Sir Caryl and I came to the conclusion that we could not be happy together—that there was—an—incompatibility of temper—which we had not sufficiently considered. That is all."

"All! By George, miss, I should say it was enough! You lose the chance of making one of the best marriages in England!"

Poor Cicely burst into tears. For reasons of her own she could not complain to her father of the cruel and rude treatment she had experienced at the hands of her lover. There were matters she must hide from everybody, though her very soul had been stung by the taunts of the baronet.

"I tell you, girl, you have thrown away a glorious good chance!"

Still the weeping girl sobbed on.

"You will never have such another. You do not know what is best for you. And pray, what do we care if Mr. St. Cyr has left Cliff Castle? Why does he mention St. Cyr? There is nothing between you, Cicely, and that penniless, immoral gamester, I trust?"

"Nothing at all," cried the poor girl, shivering.

"That is well for you! Understand me! I would rather see you in your coffin than have you have anything to do with St. Cyr. He is bad—bad. He is poor, too. Come now, Cicely, if this is only a quarrel, a bit of jealousy, or temper, no matter whose fault it was at first, had you not better make it up, before Sir Caryl is off?"

"Never!" cried Cicely, for the first time looking her father full in the face. "Never! He has offended me—hurt my pride. He is full of suspicion as well as jealousy. No, papa, I give him up. Do not scold me! All your girls are gone but I—let me stay at home with you and mamma and keep you company. You will need some one, and I shall not ever care to marry."

"Pooh, pooh! Care to marry! All girls care to marry. It is very well for you to talk now, when you are only seventeen. Wait until you are twenty-five and see what you will say! Care to marry! I dare say you will care to be settled in life before your mamma and I are gone, or what would you do then? I'm very

sorry you have quarreled with Sir Caryl. He is a most excellent young man; and to see you lady of Cliff Castle would almost have satisfied my ambition for you. Make it up, puss, make it up, or I shall be seriously angry with you."

"It never can be made up," thought Cicely.

"And now go, take the note to your mamma. You have succeeded in getting us all in a fine worry."

"Forgive me, papa," was all poor Cicely could say, while two great tears rolled down her velvet cheeks.

She took the note to her mother.

"You are not so anxious to be rid of me as to scold me, dear mamma," she said with quivering lips.

"Tell me all about it, child," was Mrs. Faye's answer.

But Cicely could not tell the reasons of this trouble. She could only sob that Sir Caryl was not so very much to blame—that she had deeply offended him—that no one was to blame.

Mrs. Faye, like the captain, believing the difficulty would best settle itself if left alone, said some soothing words to her daughter, who then went to her room and shut herself up for the remainder of the day.

That the quarrel was serious soon became evident to the Fays, for Sir Caryl Crossley got rid of his guests in some way, and left Cliff Castle in a day or two, without coming over to say goodbye to his friends at the Rookery.

Pride is a passion sometimes even stronger than love. If, after the first day, Cicely suffered, she gave few signs of it. The house was full of company, whom she delighted by her wit and gayety. Never had the lovely eyes such a fire and sparkle—never the sweet lips such musical laughter.

If Sir Caryl could have seen her, with a brilliant color on her cheeks and a dazzling light in her dark eyes, he could not have thought worse of her heartlessness and deceit than he did; for it chanced that the first stop that he made in his wanderings after leaving Cliff Castle, was in that very Cathedral-town where stood Miss Woolson's Finishing School; and there, from the mouth of a friend with whom he tarried for a day, what gossip should he hear but the story of Harley St. Cyr's haunting the place to flirt with the girls of the school, and how scandal had it that he had succeeded in getting up an affair with one of the prettiest of the pupils!

"No one believes that St. Cyr would have wasted his time in making love to a school-girl without some ulterior object," ran on the friend. "It is whispered that he was after the immense fortune of Leon, whose daughter Dolores was at the school. If so, he was nicely befooled, since, as I dare say you remember, Leon went all to pieces early last spring and took Miss Dolores out of school."

"It was not Miss Leon he was after," thought Sir Caryl, moodily. "Was ever such guile veiled by a face of such heavenly innocence? How well I remember that day I took St. Cyr to the Rookery. I had doubts about taking him there, because, as I knew, his morals were not irreproachable. But I need not have been so careful. Why, when I introduced him to her she received him as an utter stranger! Such powers of dissimulation betray long practice! Now, Cicely Faye, since *you*, whom I deemed purest and best of all young creatures, are such a traitor, such a hypocrite—for a girl who will deceive teachers, parents and lover, must be an adept in deception—I swear that I never again will have faith in one of you!—never have pity on one I may see going blindly astray,—never have mercy on one who throws herself in my way! I longed to be a good man—to settle down to a quiet, happy home-life; but you have changed all, with your fair, false face, Miss Cicely Faye! If a child-seraph should fly down into my arms out of the azure skies I would not pin any faith to her. I have nothing before me now, but to get such poor pleasure as I may out of life."

All these savage thoughts ran through his mind while his friend was still chattering away to him about St. Cyr. The very depth of this new love which had flooded his soul now turned to bitter waters, brackish as the still pools of the Dead Sea.

It seemed to him providential that he had thus stumbled upon confirmatory proof of Cicely's falsity. He left his friend's house the following day and went straight to London, where the season of fashionable dissipation was not yet over. Taking up his quarters at a West End hotel, he did not remain there long, for an uncle of his, resident on one of the fine streets in the vicinity of Kensington Gardens, insisted on the baronet's having a couple of rooms in his

house and making himself entirely at home there. Whenever Sir Caryl was in London he was much sought after; for what bachelor, young, good-looking, rich, with a title, can escape the persevering attentions of the fashionable mob? The young married ladies desire him, to give *éclat* to their entertainments; the matrons to introduce their accomplished daughters, all armed for the siege.

His uncle, Sir John Crossley, had a daughter, Lucy, his only child. Her mother had died in her infancy and the baronet had never again married. To say that this daughter was the idol, the star, the jewel, the perfect blossom of Sir John's heart, would scarcely put the truth too strongly. She had been presented to Her Majesty, and was now in the full tide of her first London season.

Yet, curiously enough, when Sir Caryl accepted his uncle's invitation to make his house his home for the few weeks before Sir John set off for a month on the Continent, he had forgotten all about his cousin Lucy. He had scarcely seen the girl since she was a little child; for the simple reason that Lucy had been educated in a French convent, and had seldom been at home when Sir Caryl was in town. He had seen her last when she was fourteen; met her twice or thrice at her father's dinner-table—a shy, silent, thin, tall girl, to whom his natural courtesy made him kindly attentive, but who made no impression at all upon him.

The first day of his visit to his uncle's he arrived just in time to dress for dinner. Sir John had not come in. His toilet completed, Sir Caryl sauntered down to the drawing-room, which, in the soft golden light of the July sunset, was pleasanter than most London drawing-rooms. The windows at the rear of the long apartment opened upon a balcony crowded with flowers at their fullest bloom. As he walked in that direction, attracted by the glow and brilliancy of color, a sweet incense of roses, carnations, orange-blossoms and jasmine was wafted toward him, making him for the moment sick at heart, for they recalled to him with strange vividness the perfumed veranda at the Rookery which he had paced with Cicely Faye when he "told his love."

He paused in the center of the room, drawing his breath with a gasp and pressing his heart with his hand.

"Are you ill, cousin Caryl?" asked a low, rich voice.

Some one arose from a sofa and came toward him, holding out her hand, with a look of shy pleasure on her beautiful face.

Was this his cousin Lucy?—this tall, elegant girl, with the thick gold hair, the dark-blue eyes, the face delicate and bloomy, the figure slim and shapely? He was surprised.

"I am afraid I should not have recognized you, Lucy, had I met you anywhere but here."

"I should have known *you* anywhere," she said, smiling. "You made a lasting impression, cousin Caryl, by your devotion to me when I was a bashful school-girl. You do not answer me, if you are ill," and she looked up at him with sweet solicitude in the truthful, lovely blue eyes.

"I'll not at all. I think I had a stitch in my side. If so, I have forgotten it already," he answered, recovering his color.

Cynical as was Caryl's mood—bitter as was his distrust of women—he could not deny to himself that Lucy was a lovely creature, with an air of irresistible frankness and sweetness. She allowed him to see that she was pleased with him and had remembered him well.

Indeed, she assured him, with a bright smile, that he had remained in her memory only to be embellished with all the virtues and graces which made up her ideal of what a man should be.

"In my mind's eye, you have taken the shape of an Admirable Crichton," she confessed to him laughingly. "Whenever I heard of a brave deed, or read of a manly action, or dreamed of a noble ideal, I said to myself: 'My cousin Caryl is like that!—and all because you won my gratitude by being good to me when I was shy and awkward.'

"You were never so mistaken, then, about a person in your life. I am mean, revengeful, suspicious, jealous, selfish—a woman-hater and everything else that is unlovely."

His brow darkened as he drew the picture of himself.

"I will never believe such base self-slander. Ah! I dare say you forget that little beggar-child you risked your life to save from being crushed under somebody's carriage-wheels—you had your foot badly hurt in doing it—that was when I was home last—very mean and selfish of you, indeed!"

"I had forgotten it; and I have degenerated since those days. Cousin Lucy, beware of me! Do not think well of me. Do not even respect me. I am ugly, hard-hearted, savage."

For all answer she reached out one of her small hands, soft as satin and white as the leaf of a jasmine-flower, and just touched his with it. He was her cousin, much older than she—Lucy was sixteen—and she looked up to him with affectionate esteem.

What she had said about making him her beau-ideal was true. Since he had won her fond, faithful allegiance by his respectful attentions when no one else noticed her, she had believed him one of the most wonderful of men. Her ardent imagination had invested him with every charming quality. Now that she came to see him again, when she herself commanded the flattery and devotion of dozens of other men, her previous admiration cast a glamour over him, so that she could see no fault in him. He was handsome, gallant, faultless. She had all the confidence in him that she had in her father. Was he not her cousin?—and the poor child had never been blessed with mother, sister or brother.

Of a warm, loving nature which put forth its tendrils to cling to all about it, it was not strange that Lucy at once turned to her cousin—that she was proud of him—fond of him.

"I am so glad you are going to stay with us until we go to Germany! I wish you would make your plans to accompany us there."

"I have no plans at present. In September, early, I think I shall go to Scotland for the shooting."

"Yes, but we start for the Spas the first week in August. We will return to England early in September. Why go to Scotland for shooting when there is plenty on papa's estates? Papa is going up to Windermere this autumn; and he would be glad to have you with him. He has already asked a dozen friends."

"Thank you; you and uncle are sufficiently hospitable. There is time enough to make plans. It really matters little to me where I go."

His face settled down into the grave, hard look which it had lately taken on. Lucy, facing him on the sofa, regarded him a little anxiously. She wanted him to be as happy as he deserved, yet he did not look cheerful. A soft pity dawned in her azure eyes.

"I am sure you are not well, cousin Caryl."

"Oh, yes, I am. There is nothing the matter with me except helplessness."

"You cannot make me believe that."

The low rays of the setting summer sun struck over the mass of red, pink, white flowers on the balcony and illuminated Lucy's hair so that it glittered like threads of spun gold. Caryl looked at her critically, and as coolly as if he were examining one of the blossoms at the window. He admired the fine texture of her fair skin, her low, smooth forehead, the length of her eyelashes, the soft bloom which just faintly colored her oval cheeks, the short upper lip, deliciously curved; he admired her slim, full figure, and the ease with which she wore a very elegant dress of white-silk tissue, set off by rose-colored sprays of delicate blossoms and pearl jewels.

She was a gentle-looking girl, lovely as moonlight. Perhaps she was more strictly beautiful than Cicely Faye; but there would always be times and occasions when Cicely would wear a more splendid charm; for there was a fire in Cicely's eyes and a firmness of the delicate features telling of that passionate nature which wakes its owner to periods of magnificent expression. Mentally, Caryl was comparing them. He thought of Cicely every moment of his waking hours—thought of her with scorn, with anger, with contempt, yet, also, with love—for it was because he could not cease loving her at will, that he was so angry with her.

He dreaded the possibility of meeting St. Cyr in the streets of London; he was afraid he might strike him in the face; as he said to himself, with a sullen laugh, "he did not care to disfigure Cicely's lover, nor to let it appear that he cared enough for him to chastise him." Now, sitting by his cousin, he said to her, suddenly:

"Do you know Harley St. Cyr?"

"I have seen him, but I do not like him. I think I heard a lady say, yesterday, that he had gone to the Continent."

"He is afraid of me," thought Sir Caryl. "He has seen my arrival announced, and takes himself out of my way."

He was mistaken there; St. Cyr was taking himself out of somebody's way, that is certainly—but not the baronet's.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Lucy.

"Hardly; yet he was my guest but a short time ago. St. Cyr is not the sort of man to

please me. He is very unprincipled, but that, I presume, is the reason he is so popular with the ladies."

"You cannot make me angry, cousin Caryl. I know I do not like bad men, and that is enough. What does St. Cyr do that is bad?"

"He wins a great deal of money from young men," answered Caryl, half smiling at the girl's simplicity.

There certainly was a great charm about this confiding young cousin.

"She is already in love with me," thought the man who watched her; "she is going to be more so. I see she has made up her mind to it. Very well. Here is my opportunity for revenge on her sex. I shall breathe no word of love to her; but, if she chooses to waste the first freshness of her warm heart on me, why, I shall allow her to do as she pleases. She will not love me seriously enough to hurt her. Women are incapable of a real passion. Let her amuse herself, trying her hand on me. I shall enjoy the little drama, with so pretty an actress."

"I will tell her First Love is a fraud, a weakling that's strangled in birth, Recalled with perfunctory tears, but lost in un-sanctified mirth."

And he smiled bitterly at the prospect of breaking his cousin's heart!

CHAPTER VI.

A SCHOOL-GIRL'S TRAGEDY.

FERDINAND LEON took his startled and weeping daughter away with him on the ocean. His visit to Porto Rico, whither he was bound, was not, perhaps, so much for the purpose of getting what he could out of his property there, as it was to escape for a period from the embarrassment, the deep mortification and the dangerous excitement of his failure—a failure which had happened from no want of prudence or honor on his part. It may be that the sea voyage saved him from insanity or paralysis.

It was a sore trial to his young daughter. That she was so dazed, so pale, so quiet, with such a strange look of woe hidden in the depths of those great black eyes, was to him suggestive only of the severity of that blow which he felt so keenly—the loss of that magnificent fortune which had made him more sought after and honored than many a man with a title to his name. Leon had the true blood of a Spanish gentleman; he was fiery but ceremonious, proud as Lucifer, punctilious, with high ideas of personal honor.

His only son, who was to have been heir to a princely fortune, had died at fourteen. Now, for the first time, his father was somewhat reconciled to the lad's loss. But, he had never been very affectionate in his manner with Dolores. He was too stately—too sorry that she was not a boy; and now, when she was homesick, grieving over the parting from all, save him, that she held dear, she could not fling herself into his arms to sob out the grief which was half-killing her.

Sometimes, as she sat languidly on deck, drooping like a gathered flower, she would turn her passionate eyes upon him with an imploring expression, as if inviting him to persuade her to closer confidence; but the ruined merchant was thinking more of business than of his daughter; and so, through all the weary voyage, she got no nearer to him.

The British steamer which bore them across the sea took them straight into the port of St. John, the capital of Porto Rico; and there, when her melancholy eyes first fell on the fair summerland—for it had been wintry weather when they left England—Dolores brightened up for a few moments.

The scarlet threads showed in the velvet texture of her olive cheeks, her eyes shone with a diamond luster, she was again the handsome, brilliant Dolores, who drew the looks of strangers to her rare tropical beauty as the magnolia draws bees.

As she came on deck, eager to gain the shore, some one crossed the plank from the wharf, and approached Mr. Leon:

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Señor Leon?"

"You have. May I ask who you are?"

"I am Martin Marshall, son of your partner here. My father is expecting you and has sent me to beg of you to do him the honor to come directly to his house, and to make it your home while you remain at St. John."

"Ten thousand thanks. Does your father know that my daughter is with me?"

"You wrote that you expected to bring her. He will be only the more pleased. I have a sister who will be delighted, Señor Leon, to do what she can for Miss Leon."

He glanced at the beautiful stranger as he spoke, bowing low when Ferdinand Leon presented her to him. The liquid fire of those wonderful eyes pierced to his heart; and Dolores, worn-out, homesick, condescended to be interested in the bright, energetic, fine-looking young fellow, and to smile upon him in return for his assiduous attentions.

Mr. Marshall, senior, was a citizen of the United States, who had invested his money in coffee and sugar speculations, in company with Mr. Leon. He had nothing to do with Leon's London failure, nor did it affect him more deeply than the loss of a hundred thousand dollars. The house in Porto Rico remained firm after meeting its share of liabilities.

A carriage-drive of some miles through the soft sunset air brought the visitors in sight of a place so beautiful that it would seem Paradise could scarce be fairer. Leaving England in March, the unexpected brilliancy of the summer scene was deeply impressed upon the senses of the weary young Dolores. She clasped her hands together in wordless ecstasy, her large eyes burned with passionate delight, she leaned forward eagerly, as the carriage approached, through a long avenue of magnificent flowering trees, a low, large house fairly nested in bloom of the most dazzling colors. Then and there, Martin Marshall, watching her as eagerly as she the tropic scene, resolved, if he could, to win this appreciative young lady to remain always with them. Her vivid, passionate beauty appealed to his calmer nature with all the power of opposites. Before he lifted her from the carriage onto the long porch where his pretty sister stood ready to welcome her, his purpose was fixed to win Dolores Leon for his wife.

As for Dolores, with the fiery blood of the South flowing in her veins, she had never before made the acquaintance of a tropical clime. She had shivered through life in England; and now that the warmth and glory and rich coloring of a southern island burst upon her senses, she felt as if, for the first time, she were at home. For all this she had longed; of all this she had dreamed.

Yet—a cold chill pierced to her heart, before the soft hand of Edith Marshall had fallen on her own—a chill as of death and despair. What had she to do with this beautiful world?

Her lot was appointed—her destiny chosen. With wicked, unpardonable rashness, she had reached out to grasp the toy, happiness, as an infant clamors for the forbidden bauble, and now—what?

She turned white; the cold sweat stood in beads on her forehead.

"You are ill," exclaimed Edith, compassionately.

"A little—dizzy, from coming off the water."

They led her in and gave her a glass of wine.

Before bedtime she felt quite at home in that friendly house. She admired Edith, and liked Mr. Marshall; as to his son, she shrank and quivered all over when she recalled the impression which she saw she had made on him.

Mr. Leon's stay in Porto Rico was to be limited to a month. Three weeks of this had glided swiftly away, when Martin, one morning, sought an interview with him, as he was walking up and down a shady alley of the flower-garden, smoking his cigar.

Mr. Leon knew what the young man had to say, before he began his rather tremulous speech, and encouraged him with a kind smile:

"Señor Leon, I have become deeply attached to your daughter."

"Is that so? You know Dolores is no longer the heiress she once was."

"Very true; but that is my great gain, as I look upon it. Were she still the great heiress I should not venture to approach her. As it is, all that I have I long to place at her feet. I am far from poor, though not rich, according to your magnificent standard, perhaps. When I came of age, a year ago, I was put in possession of £50,000, willed to me by an uncle who died, unmarried, several years before. This sum, with what my father will be able to give me, assures me independence."

"I have no fault to find with your prospects, Mr. Marshall; neither with your morals or character in any way. I have taken a liking to you. You will meet with no opposition on my part, if my daughter fancies you. Have you spoken to her?"

"No, señor; I come to you for permission to do so."

"You have that permission."

"Ten thousand thanks! I am most grateful. Yet, I confess to you, my hopes are not as bright as I wish they were. I have received no encouragement from Miss Leon."

"Fie, fie! Faint heart never won fair lady."

I believe Dolores fancies you. If she has not yet thought of love, 'tis because she is only a child. You have the first opportunity, and it will be your own fault if you do not make good use of it. There she is now, walking in the rose-alley! Go to her and see what she will say to you. I prophesy she will not be hard to win," and smiling suavely, Leon walked away.

Martin lingered for a full minute before moving toward Dolores. It was true, she had given him no encouragement. One day she would be sparkling and animated, the next dull and pale.

His steel-blue eyes darkened like lakes when clouds hang over them. Supposing she did not care for him?

Martin Marshall staked his future happiness on the cast of the die. Of an earnest, energetic nature, his was not the love of a trifler. He was determined to win her, if love and persistence could do it. Yet he dreaded the first refusal, which he was almost sure he should receive. As soon as his will had forced this dread into the background he walked forward and overtook Miss Leon.

When she found him by her side Dolores uttered a little cry; the face she turned toward him was pale, there were dark circles under her eyes—he could see that she had been crying!

"You are homesick," he said, gently. "I have so hoped we could make you contented here."

"No, I am not homesick. I would to Heaven that I could stay on this island forever!" and she cast a passionate glance over the blooming land, ringed in by the sapphire sea.

"That is just my wish—my hope! Miss Leon—Dolores—I have allowed myself to dream that I could persuade you to—"

"Oh, do not speak! I pray you, do not say another word!"

"Not tell you my love! Nay, I must, dear Dolores. I should—"

"Hush, oh, hush! You cannot imagine how you distress—crush me—by speaking so, or you would be silent when I ask you!"

She trembled from head to foot. There was a world of woe in the great dark eyes fixed imploringly on him. He saw that this was no coquettish trifling of one who expected, after all, to yield.

"I did not think to distress you, dear Dolores. I would not pain, frighten, wound you. But when you ask me to be silent you ask me to be unhappy. I had no great hopes that you would hear me favorably; yet, all the same, I must try. To let you go, without making my appeal, would be to play the coward. Dolores, you do not love me now, yet, is there no hope? Some time, when we have known each other longer, will you not try to learn to love me? I will follow you to England—I will wait years."

"I do love you, now," she said, in a low voice, without blushing or smiling, fixing her eyes, full of a strange woe, on his eager face.

"Do love me! Darling Dolores!"

"No! do not touch me! You must not! Our love for each other will never do either of us any good."

"Why not? You are talking wildly, my sweet! Since you love me, all will be well. There is no trouble that your love will not turn into joy."

"Oh, yes! there is one trouble, Martin."

"What is that?"

There was something so drooping in her attitude, so wistful and despairing in her look, that, eager and joyful as he was, he felt checked and saddened.

"Let me go into the house, Martin. Ah! I shall die!" Those last four words were uttered like a cry.

"Yes, yes, you shall go. Tell me, first, what the trouble is, Dolores!"

"You will have it?"

"I ought to have it. I love you, and I ought to know."

"Well," she cried, in desperation, "you shall have it!"

"My dear, good, darling Dolores!"

"The one thing that will keep you and I apart is this—"

"Yes, darling."

"That I am already a married woman!"

Martin stepped back and gazed at her, horror-stricken.

"You—at sixteen—a married woman."

"I have told you so."

"Does your father know that?"

"No, oh no."

"And you say you love me?"

She looked up at him pitifully; his lip curled with something very like scorn; yet she looked so soft, so pleading, so utterly wretched, so beautiful, that his heart melted in the same moment.

"Perhaps you can explain," he added.

"I begged you not to speak, but you would not be stopped. Do me the justice to admit that I have never trifled with you."

"You have not, but—a married woman, Dolores?"

"Yes; and the most hopeless, miserable creature on earth!"

She burst out into passionate crying, beginning to walk away from him.

He kept by her side. He looked pale and shocked himself, but he felt afraid, by her looks, that she might do something desperate.

They came to a remote part of the garden, where a thicket of flowering shrubs arrested their progress. She turned, and found Martin still by her side.

"I am glad you know it, Mr. Marshall. It has been a terrible thing for me to carry this secret about with me."

"Was it a clandestine marriage?" he asked.

"Yes. May I tell you about it?"

He nodded his head, unable to speak.

"I was a foolish, romantic school-girl. A person—as I afterward learned, one of the most fashionable gallants of London, but a man who lived and kept up his elegant style by preying on others—came to the town in which my school is situated, and began, persistently, to follow me and make me feel that he had selected me as the object of his admiration. I was flattered beyond measure at the thought of so elegant a gentleman having fallen in love with me. I thought it my clear duty to return his devotion. I fancied myself falling headlong in love. I exchanged notes and letters with him, through the medium of the old woman who kept the gate. He made the most earnest, passionate declarations of passion. He was much older than I—not such a man as I would have chosen from sympathetic attraction; but he knew just how to gain influence over me, to flatter my vanity, make me pity him and imagine myself in love with him. He asked me to marry him. At the same time he declared that he knew my father, who had an unreasonable prejudice against him, solely because he was not a very rich man, and begged me to keep the affair secret from him—"

"Scoundrel!"

"Yes, scoundrel; but I did not know it then. I thought I was doing a most generous, noble, unselfish thing, in promising to marry one who loved me so well, against whom my father was so unreasonably prejudiced. It was arranged between us that, when I went home to London for the Christmas Holidays, we were to go together to some church and be privately married, keeping it a secret until I had left school. We did so. I went back to my girl-friends and my books, a wife—though I had not seen my husband since I parted with him at the church door."

"Did you meet him afterward?"

Martin asked this question with a gasp. A burning blush submerged brow and bosom of the beautiful girl before him; the long black lashes fell lower still, as she answered him:

"I did meet him, a dozen times, in the Lodge at the gate of our school. But I swear to you, Mr. Marshall, that I *never* met him except in the presence of the woman there. Well! I was learning to really love him. I put away all vain regrets at my haste and romantic folly; I believed that I fondly, passionately adored the man who had persuaded me to a false step—to deceive my father—to ruin my future. I invested my husband with all the charms of my too fervent imagination. Then—my father failed."

"And you found you had been the dupe of a villain who had married you, to get a hold on Señor Leon's fortune?"

Martin spoke quickly and passionately. Dolores lifted her heavy, melancholy eyes to meet his ardent gaze; she pressed her hand to her heart:

"It is killing me by inches," she murmured, "to think of that. Ah! that was a cruel, dastardly blow to deal a confiding child such as I was! When I got the news that my father was in trouble—that I was to go to him at once, and that I was to be brought here, I wrote a letter to my husband telling him all, and asking him to follow me to London at once and declare our marriage to my father, so that I might remain behind with him. I told him papa's failure might be a happy thing for us—that it might be the means of reconciling papa to his lack of fortune. I smile, now, when I think of that letter"—bitterly.

"Well?"

"He never came to me in London. He wrote me a short letter. I have it here." Dolores took her pocket-book from her pocket, and drew from it a folded slip of note-paper and read:

"DEAR DOLORES: We have both made a sad mistake. I married you for your money, and you have none. You married me for my love, and I have none. Fortunately, our secret is our own. Keep it, as religiously as I shall, and no one will be the wiser. Some day I hope to hear that you have made a better marriage. Your first one need not trouble your conscience, since nothing has come of it."

"Truly, your friend."

"Was not that a cruel letter for a girl to receive who was all trust, fondness and faith?"

"The first few days I thought I could not possibly live. I had to bear my agony alone. Then, for the world, I did not dare confide in my father. I knew such a trouble, added to all the rest, would overwhelm him. I must keep my suffering to myself. I think the very cruelty of the torture saved me. Contempt, scorn for the man who had fooled me so heartlessly, came to my rescue. I felt that I could be thankful that my father's misfortunes had occurred in time to open my eyes to the character of the adventurer whom I had invested with false glory. I hate that man who has destroyed my future! Sometimes I am afraid I shall be tempted to seek a murderous revenge."

"Now, Mr. Marshall, you know all. I am glad to tell you this. I believe I should go insane soon if I could not speak to some one. You see that my life is a total wreck, all through my own school-girl folly."

"Perhaps not quite a wreck," murmured Martin.

He could say no more then. This poor girl was to be pitied; but she was a wife, and he must be on his guard and good behavior.

"I do not know that I shall ever tell my father. He cannot bear it yet. You must keep what I have told you a profound secret. *My* punishment is to live alone and loveless all the long years of my life. I shall tell papa that I never wish to marry, and that must end it. The sooner we leave this lovely island, which has seemed a paradise to me, the better for me. I would we were going to-day."

And a week from then, Leon and his beautiful daughter set sail to return to England, leaving one human heart as heavy as it had been light at their coming.

CHAPTER VII.

THREATENED WITH A STRANGE DANGER.

AGAIN in the early morning Cicely was walking on the sands. Poor child, it was only when she was alone that she could throw off the mask of gayety which she wore. In her father's house she was bright as a butterfly, joyous as a lark. On the wet beach, this cloudy July morning, she was a different creature from that brilliant girl who had sung, played, danced, smiled, in the drawing-room of the Rookery the previous evening. Pale, distracted, clasping and unclasping her little white hands, she walked up and down, throwing glances at the troubled ocean almost wild with her sorrow.

A summer storm was gathering. Great masses of clouds of ebon blackness fringed with vivid gold rolled up toward the zenith. Little flurries of wind swooped down on the dull sea, whirling off a little shower of spray, and away again. The water was gray and still, except when thus ruffled; yet the thunder of the sky, muttering far away, was answered by the moan of the undercurrents. The whiffs of air that came now and then were warm—curiously so.

Cicely ought to have gone home to be present at the breakfast-table instead of lingering to watch the swift march of the storm; but she had, for a long, miserable week, held her feelings down while she played at happiness, until, this morning, she must give way before them. She felt a strange sympathy with the elements; like the winds and waves she longed to be free to mingle with the tempest.

When Sir Caryl fell in love with Cicely he said to himself that hers was no ordinary character. Nor was it. A girl who could endure what Cicely had endured, in the last two weeks, for *friendship*, must be one whose *love* was richly worth the winning. She had made a great sacrifice for a friend, trusting that time would set her right in the eyes of the man she loved. Had Caryl been less overbearing in his accusations, after having discovered her in acts which so certainly *seemed* compromising, she would have explained enough to him to set his suspicions at rest, although solemnly pledged not to betray the secrets of her friend. Her lover had approached her with insulting demands for an explanation—her ready pride had sprung to arms—she had refused to make them.

This morning Cicely's pride was in the dust. To have had Caryl walking with her there, to have had the opportunity to tell him humbly the facts which had disgraced her in his eyes,

she would have done almost anything. More than once she murmured:

"If he ever really loved me he will come back again, some day."

Then she would reflect upon the abundant reason he had to be suspicious, and despair would torture her.

Lightning began to play out of two great masses of clouds lying separate in the heavens, one to the south, one to the north. The ebon masses stood up like mighty forts, while the flash of the thunderbolts was like grand artillery playing from one fort against the other. It was a magnificent spectacle, so sublime as to win Cicely for a few moments from the contemplation of her griefs. She climbed the rude path to "Boffin's Bower," flung herself down on the rock, and watched this wild battle of the clouds. The sea darkened; the wind ran over it, giving it purple and green hues that gradually set in one sullen smoky color. Soon the wind struck her with such force as to almost take her breath; it took hold of her long, brown hair and threw it back from her face like a banner.

The storm came nearer; the thunder rolled incessantly, the rain came down in swirling masses. Her light muslin dress was drenched; but it was too late to think of moving before the force of the brief summer tempest was spent, so she sat there, and found relief from her own great trouble in watching the effects of the tempest and rain.

Just before the rain came down Cicely saw some one walking on the beach where she had been before she took to the scant refuge of the Bower. For a few seconds the darkness was so great, and the rain came down in such blinding force, that she lost sight of this solitary personage. Something in the figure and walk had excited her suspicions as to who this person might be.

As soon as the rain held up for one of those sudden pauses which come in storms, she leaned over the cliff and looked down.

The man was still walking there—St. Cyr!

She was certain of it, though he was dressed in a rough suit and had a cap pulled down over his eyes, making him appear more like a hedger or a poor farmer, than that ineffable dandy. Harley St. Cyr it was!

What was he doing there?

Sir Caryl had taken particular pains to let her know that this person had made his departure from the vicinity. She knew that Cliff Castle was closed. What could he be doing here?

The waves, although the tide was out, washed over his feet, as he went up and down, in shallow ripples, driven high as the sands by the rushing wind. While she watched him a woman, tall, slight, her wet garments clogging her movements, stole out from behind that projection of the cliff which we have described, and followed on behind.

"It is Dolores again! I thought both of them were gone! He has come here again by appointment to meet her."

The woman was gliding along a few paces behind St. Cyr. She had a long water-proof cloak around her; the hood was over her head; she kept in the rear of the man.

Suddenly Cicely threw up her hands and gave a sharp cry of warning. She was too late about it. The woman had darted up to the man, before he was aware of her presence. Cicely had scarcely comprehended her purpose before she saw the flash of a pistol, a light wreath of smoke, and St. Cyr—if he it were—falling to the ground.

Then a loud roll of thunder rattled close over her head, the rain came down in a fierce dash, like the charge of cavalry; all she could do for the next five minutes, was to grovel as close to the rock as possible, face down.

As soon as this wildest and last effort of the tempest lost somewhat of its force, she picked her way down the rough path and ran to the spot where she had seen the brief drama acted.

The woman had disappeared; her victim lay on the sands, dead, or apparently so. The pale face, with closed eyes, was indeed St. Cyr's.

Faint and sick at heart Cicely gazed upon him.

How quickly the mind will grasp a thousand ideas in such a moment! Her first impulse was to run, shrieking, for help. The second was to steal up to the house, change her clothes, say nothing to any one of what she had seen, but leave the body to be discovered by others.

Such a course would save her own name from gossip, for it came upon her with startling power, how strange it would appear to others that she should be there on the beach at so early an hour and in such a storm!

Also, it would give her poor, unhappy friend

more time in which to make her escape from the scene of her crime. For, that Dolores had been the one to meet St. Cyr and thus take her desperate revenge for the wrong he had done her, she had not the shadow of a doubt.

She had herself aided Dolores to have an interview with St. Cyr, that day on which she had written to him to meet her on the beach. It was Dolores she meant him to meet there; it was Dolores's secret she was faithfully keeping when she refused an explanation to Sir Caryl.

She had supposed her friend was safe in London with her father, until she became an involuntary witness of the tragic scene in the storm.

Her second impulse, as we have said, was still to protect her friend—her foolish, mad friend—from the consequences of this rash and fearfully criminal act. So she stood there, over the prostrate body, for two or three minutes, trying to decide what it was best she should do.

It might be that St. Cyr had only fainted. There was a little pool of blood under his left shoulder. If not yet dead, he needed care; it was her duty to send assistance immediately to him.

She stooped, and, shuddering at first from head to foot, felt his pulse—placed her hand over his heart. There was not the slightest motion.

The certainty that he was dead, led her back to her desire to shield her dear friend from the danger of her rash and most wicked deed. She resolved to go quietly home and say nothing. She hoped to be able to reach her chamber without meeting any one.

Cicely was young, generous, imprudent!—she could not think on every side of the terrible dilemma in which she had become involved.

She chose that side which was safest for her friend.

She left the beach—left its terrible story to be told by the first passer-by, made her way toward the house, went round into the shrubbery, came through the flower-garden, and entered by a door which led into the morning-room. So far, she encountered not a human creature. The violent rain had kept people under shelter; and at the Rookery she presumed only the servants would be out of bed.

She had fled up the stairs, and had nearly gained her room, when a door at the upper end of the corridor opened, and some one stepped out.

Her broad-brimmed garden-hat was drawn down over her face; she pretended not to observe that any one was in the hall, but opened the door of her room and glided within.

Once safe in this retreat she sunk down on the floor. It seemed to her that she should faint or die. The horror of what she knew just began to come to her. Before, she had been so confounded, so shocked, that she had not realized anything—that St. Cyr was dead—murdered! That she had been a witness of the scene! Her own danger began to occur to her.

Forcing herself by pure power of will to keep from swooning, she struggled to her feet. The little ormolu clock on the mantle told her that in half an hour breakfast would be on the table. She longed to go to bed, to bury her face in the pillows, to hide from every eye; yet she knew such a course would not be prudent. She must get off her wet, sand-draggled garments and make a fresh toilet. She must go down to the breakfast-room, laugh and chat with the Rookery visitors as if nothing had occurred. Not many girls of her age would have been equal to so severe an effort. The one thought that it must be done carried her through with tolerable success.

She did not want her maid to see her storm-drenched clothes, so, after some hesitation, she rolled them up and hid them away in a trunk standing in a closet off her dressing-room, and put the key of the trunk in her pocket. She had hardly done this and donned a dressing-jacket, beginning to comb out her long damp hair, when the girl came in, saying that she had knocked once or twice before.

"Well, Nora, I do not need you this morning. I shall just braid my hair in one braid down my back. Please go see if Miss Nugent does not require some assistance."

"I think Miss Nugent might bring her own maid," muttered Nora, as she went away. "Miss Cicely is that generous, she don't never think of herself. I can't abide to do things for that Nugent, she's that ill-tempered and no thanks for what you do!"

Cicely braided her hair and put on a pretty pink morning-dress. She was in hopes the pink dress would impart some of its rose-color to her face, for she realized that she was very pale.

Never, in all her brief young life, had she done anything requiring so brave an effort as to walk into the breakfast-room at nine o'clock.

There was a smile on her sweet face as she greeted the little party assembled there. Her voice sounded strained and odd to herself; yet it is probable that no one would have noticed her pallor or her nervousness, had not Miss Nugent—a satirical young lady of twenty-six—called attention to it.

"I don't wonder your color is washed out, dear Cicely, after the drenching you got this morning."

"Were you out in the storm, my dear?" asked the captain, looking up at his trembling daughter.

"I went out for a little breath of air, and the storm came up so quickly, papa, I got caught."

"Where were you?"

"In the flower-garden, papa," answered poor Cicely, telling the truth, but not all the truth. "I do not think I shall be any the worse for a wetting. You know I have a habit of walking before breakfast."

"A habit to which she owes much of her fine color, I doubt not," remarked Major Barmely, gallantly.

"But, you should have seen her when she came in!" persisted Miss Nugent, laughing affectedly. "She looked forlorn enough, I assure you!"

"Mamma, did you say the Berkeleys are to give an archery-party next Monday?" asked Cicely, to turn the current of talk from herself.

"Yes. Our invitations came last evening;" and then the company began to chat about archery, leaving Cicely to herself.

She forced herself to eat and drink, to respond in some fashion when she was spoken to. What she suffered mean time can only be inferred.

She was making desperate efforts to nerve herself against that hour, which she felt must be approaching, when the murder would be discovered and announced at the Rookery.

It came sooner even than she had anticipated.

They were still in the midst of the archery discussion, when a servant entered the room in such a state of excitement as to at once arrest the attention of all; his eyes were like saucers, his teeth chattered when he attempted to speak.

"What is it, Joe?" asked Captain Faye.

"Oh, sir, there's been a murder down on the beach!"

The company stared at the intruder.

"A murder? Who? What? How do you know?" asked the captain, rising from his chair.

"I hope to heaven poor Dolores has gotten safely away!" thought Cicely, turning as white and still as marble.

"Oh, Captain Faye, if you only knew! 'Twill be a great shock!"

"Out with it!" cried his master, sternly.

"Well, sir, as Bob Batters, the old fisherman, you know, sir, was a-going along the beach a bit ago, as he come right opposite the Rookery, he saw a man a-lying on the sand, an' he walked up to him an' found him dead as a door-nail. The man had been shot in the shoulder. He called some of us down, and who do you think it proved to be, sir?"

"That is what I am waiting for you to tell me."

"Well, it was that fine gentleman as visited at Cliff Castle an' often called here, sir—St. Cyr—it was Mr. St. Cyr."

An exclamation of surprise and horror broke from all.

"Are you sure, Joe? Mr. St. Cyr was not in this part of the country."

"It's he, dead-sure. And the queer part of it, ladies and gentlemen," continued the man, feeling that he was addressing quite an audience, "the queer part of it is, that he was not dressed like himself at all, but in the clothes of a laboring man."

More exclamations of surprise from everybody but Cicely; she sat rigid and blanched, gazing at the informer with wide eyes.

"Excuse me, ladies. Come along, major. We must see into this," said the captain, hurriedly. "Norfolk, will you go with us?"

The three gentlemen, joined by Lord Graham, who had only just come down to breakfast, went away to the beach, leaving the ladies to stare at each other. Miss Nugent fixed her cold gray eyes upon Cicely:

"Aren't you glad you did not go to the beach, this morning?" she asked.

Cicely could not answer her; but she felt a scarlet flush rising and burning in place of her marble pallor. She would have given worlds to have kept down the telltale blush, but she could not.

A green light came into the feline eyes which smiled at her.

"Mamma, can it really be St. Cyr?" poor

Cicely finally managed to ask, to divert that look which seemed to read her soul.

"We shall soon know. Come! I cannot sit here. Let us go out on the lawn. I will send a messenger, if Captain Faye does not return in a few moments."

And the ladies, fluttering like a covey of frightened birds, hovered on the lawn, feeling that it would be "too dreadful" in the house, until the gentlemen returned with word that it was St. Cyr, and that he was dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BALL-ROOM SPECTER.

THE work of breaking Lucy Crossley's heart went bravely on.

She was more than fascinated by her studiously-indifferent cousin. If she had been a more artful girl it might have been said that "she flung herself at his head;" as it was Caryl knew perfectly well how innocent she was of all art—that she just simply loved him, as the roses bloom or the violets grow blue, without thought, without calculation.

He knew, too, that he ought to have confided to her, on the very first day of his coming into her home, that he loved, or had loved, another woman. But, Caryl was in a hard, wicked mood. He would not put forth a hand to keep his young cousin from hurting herself. All the passion one of her sex could feel would not seriously harm her. If she blindly and willfully broke her own heart, she would easily mend it with another lover. He would not trouble himself to warn her!

He did not acknowledge to himself that it was pleasant to have this lovely girl doing homage to him, as if he were a god and she were his priestess.

He went with her everywhere that she asked him to go—was her escort when she rode in the park, went to the opera or to an occasional ball. He drove with her, shopped with her, allowed himself to be made that useful creature which a good-looking cousin can sometimes be.

Lucy soon teased her father to give her a ball. There were still plenty of people in London, and—as she argued—she had not yet been given her coming-out party, although she had been presented at court. Immediately after Sir Caryl's arrival she began to think of it; at the end of ten days the wish was an accomplished fact.

Sir John's fine house was turned into a flower-garden for the occasion. He spent an extravagant sum on the flowers, music and supper. Not extremely rich, he had accumulated some money, while his daughter was in school, by saving half his liberal income; now that Lucy was coming out as a young lady he had pride enough in her and in the family to desire her first ball to be something unusually attractive.

"There will be one beauty present, to-night, cousin Caryl," asserted Lucy, as they sat at a dinner which had been served an hour earlier than usual in order to have the room cleared for dancing.

"I am aware of that," he answered, with a look into her blue eyes.

"I want you to meet her and tell me if you do not agree with me," she continued, smiling and coloring. "Her name is Leon—Miss Dolores Leon. Her father is of Spanish birth, and she has the dark, glorious Spanish beauty. Señor Leon, you know, I dare say, was a merchant of fabulous wealth, who failed last spring. Papa was always a friend of his—for the Leon family was of the old blue blood of Spain—if this Leon did take to trade—and clings to him still, don't you, papa, dear? I have only seen Dolores once or twice, I have been away so much in France, but I fell in love with her at first sight. Such eyes! melted diamonds! You must see them for yourself. She was educated, I believe, at Miss Woolson's Finishing School at S—."

Sir Caryl started when he heard that.

"When did she leave school?"

"Last March—the time of her father's failure."

"Then she must have known Cicely Faye," thought he, but he did not say it, for he had never mentioned Cicely to his fair cousin. "I remember hearing her speak of Dolores Leon as her bosom-friend. I wonder if this Miss Leon knows about St. Cyr? If the two girls were so intimate, she probably does know all about that disgraceful affair!"

Sir Caryl began to take more interest in the ball. He would not admit it to himself, but it was so. He wanted to meet Miss Leon and lead her to talk about Cicely Faye.

"Be sure you do not neglect to introduce me to this wonderful beauty early in the evening," he cried, gayly.

THE LOCKED HEART.

A pang went through Lucy's gentle heart. Perhaps she had been too generous in Miss Leon's praise! She thought, "What if he should yield to the spell of those dark eyes?"

Lucy was not vain, but she looked at herself long and anxiously, when she was dressed for the ball; she wanted to look well in Caryl's eyes. The morning star shining out of moonlit mist, could not be fairer than she in her fleecy white dress, looped with pale pink roses.

"Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls," quoted Caryl to her, when she floated down the grand staircase—wreathed with smilax and camellias—and stood before him in the drawing-room:

"In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun."

"Are you satisfied with me, cousin Caryl?"
"I should be a graceless critic were I not."

"Papa, are *you* satisfied with me?" as Sir John sailed into the room, carefully dressed, a fresh and lovable old gentleman. "No, no, you must not touch me!" as the proud parent was about to give her an approving hug. "My dress, papa, is like the bloom on the grape, not to be touched!"

"This will be one of the proudest days of my life," murmured Sir John, who had made a good many dinner-table speeches in his time. "The girl is sweeter than an English violet, isn't she, Caryl, my boy?"

"If she will fall in love with me I shall have to marry her to keep from hurting my good uncle's feelings," thought the nephew, in a sudden spasm of remorse.

The rooms began to fill. While making himself agreeable, with the ease of a man of the world, to such of his fair acquaintance as he saw, Sir Caryl kept a sharp look-out for the dark eyes of Miss Leon. He had danced three times, and Lucy having stood by her father's side to receive her guests, had at length been free to accept his invitation for the fourth, when he asked her:

"Is not Miss Leon here?"

"I am afraid she is not coming, although I have not received her regrets. Ah! there she is now! Take a good look at her. I must go and speak to her. As soon as I can bring it about I will introduce you."

Sir Caryl saw a tall, slight girl, graceful as a willow, on the arm of a gentleman of dark and haughty face, a Spanish grandee still, if a ruined merchant. Miss Leon was simply dressed in white, without a jewel, except a string of large pearls that rested lovingly against the satiny warmth of her beautiful olive-tinted neck. For one so young she had a strangely melancholy expression, which others attributed to her father's business troubles, without any knowledge of the truth. At first, as she entered the room, she was pale, with a far-away, dreamy look in her large eyes; before Caryl was presented to her, however, some emotion had brought the exquisite color to her cheek; but trouble and mystery were in her unfathomable eyes which baffled him.

They floated through the measures of a dreamy waltz together; Caryl found that she danced like thistle-down. Yet she never smiled at his compliments; she seemed not to be thinking of the place or time.

"You waltz so ethereally, Miss Leon, you should be fond of it."

"I am not. I do not care for society. If my father had not urged it I should not be here to-night."

"You are not an invalid?"

"No; I do not care for the world."

"You live above it," suggested her companion, deferentially.

"No, no, oh, no! Not above it! I am simply indifferent!" she spoke quickly, with a deprecatory motion of her hands, while a burning blush for a single moment fired cheek and forehead, to die away as quickly.

"Since I do not care for dancing, either, suppose we sit here in this window and look on at the others awhile?" suggested Sir Caryl.

He wanted to lead his companion on to talking about her school. She yielded to his proposition, and he found her a seat where the draperies of the window made a sort of half-retirement.

The sad, passionate music of the waltz throbbed through the crowded, flower-scented room; Sir Caryl stood by the pensive, beautiful stranger, half wondering at her utter want of the ordinary coquettish ways of pretty women.

He told her how his cousin had been educated in France, contriving to ask her if she, too, had been "finished" abroad.

He affected surprise when informed that she had been tutelage of Miss Woolson, in S-

"Indeed! Then, perhaps, you know an acquaintance of mine, Miss Faye?"

It was with an effort he pronounced the name; but the wild, restless jealousy that worked within urged him on to speak.

"Cicely Faye! Oh, yes, I know her well!" the great dark eyes lighting up with a sudden splendor. "We were chums—shared the same room."

"Yes?"

"She is the very loveliest girl in the whole world!—a person capable of true friendship. I know, for I have put her friendship to trial."

Sir Caryl looked down with a sneer into the kindling face:

"I thought it impossible for true friendship to exist between women—especially young and pretty ones. You must pardon me if I admit that I am skeptical."

"So am I. I hate women, generally," admitted Miss Leon, frankly. "But Cicely Faye is the one exception which proves the rule. *She is true as steel!*" emphatically.

"I have only known her since she came from school, in May."

"I remember, now, that I have heard her speak of you," said Dolores with a sudden inquisitive look.

"Have you seen her since you returned from Porto Rico, Miss Leon?"

Again that scarlet flush crept up into the pale olive cheeks.

"I went to see her," she answered, unwillingly.

"Tell me," cried Sir Caryl, in a desperate burst of feeling, "did you, did she make the acquaintance of Mr. St. Cyr while in S—?"

Dolores stared up at him with wide, terrified eyes. Her own emotion was so great that she quite misunderstood his. She grew white, and she opened her lips twice to answer without making a sound.

"Oh, you need not betray your friend, Miss Leon! I take back my impudent question," with that fine sneer again.

"My friend! betray my friend!" her look of fright changing to one of surprise.

"Never mind, Miss Leon! We will change the subject."

He considered her puzzled expression a piece of womanly acting, done in defense of Cicely Faye. He believed that he had surprised the truth out of her in that first instant when he brought up St. Cyr's name. *She had been alarmed for her guilty friend.* No after-acting could persuade him from that first discovery.

He congratulated himself on his keenness; he thought worse of Cicely than before.

Unable to recover his assumed carelessness at once, he stood silent, staring at the brilliant kaleidoscope pictures made by the dancers, while the low, soft, dreamy music beat, beat, beat on heart and brain, sadder, more passionate, more full of longing and pain and delicious madness than ever before.

While he stood there, moodily silent, disturbed more than he knew, and Dolores furtively watched him, two gentlemen came in front of the window-recess and paused there to have a chat. One of these was the host, Sir John, the other a younger man of fashionable figure.

"There has been a strange report flying about the streets to-night, Sir John. I am afraid it is true."

"What is it? I heard of nothing unusual before I came home to dinner."

"I do not think the news has been in London more than a couple of hours. It is a wild story, which still lacks complete confirmation; though I, myself, went to a newspaper office to learn about the telegram; it was that made me so late in arriving, Sir John."

"What is this strange news, Mr. Verner?"

"It is about St. Cyr. You know Harley St. Cyr?"

"By reputation very well. I have met him several times."

"Well, the report to-night, by telegraph from the western coast, is that St. Cyr was shot dead, early this morning, on the beach somewhere near Cliff Castle. His body, still warm, was found on the sands, and no one has, as yet, discovered the murderer. He was shot in the shoulder."

Sir Caryl heard every word of this piece of news. In an instant his hatred and jealousy of the man who, less than a month ago, was his guest, sitting at his table, eating his salt, and was now dead and gone by the hand of an assassin, died out. He had felt the impulse, in some of the wildest moments of jealousy, to do a similar deed. How grateful he was that such wicked impulses had died in their birth!

What had St. Cyr been doing to bring such a fate on himself? He stood dazed and awed for

several moments, while Sir John and his young acquaintance still talked on the startling subject.

After awhile he remembered that Miss Leon knew St. Cyr and must have heard what was said about his fate. He turned to speak to her about it. A terrible change had come over her. She was staring, with fixed eyes, at the speakers. Her face seemed frozen in its awful expression!

What was that expression? Was it solely of horror? No. It was a strange, indescribable look of conflicting passions. She was not unconscious, although she seemed as if her senses were spellbound.

He spoke to her in a low voice, so as not to attract the attention of others. She did not appear to hear him. Then he touched her—laid his gloved hand on her soft round arm, and shook it lightly. She drew a long, shivering breath, and turned those solemn, unfathomable eyes to him.

"Will you find my father?" she gasped. "I want him to take me home."

Without a word Sir Caryl dropped the curtain before her to hide her from prying eyes, and went away to find Sefior Leon.

In five minutes the Spaniard and his daughter were out of the rooms. Dolores did not attempt to bid good-night to her young hostess.

Sir Caryl went out and found Leon's carriage, a timely service for which the Spaniard warmly thanked him; then returned to Lucy Crossley, who had just begun to miss the attentions she had expected from him.

He said nothing about the strange news he had heard; but it got whispered about until soon everybody was talking of it, and a light shadow fell over the brilliant scene—that shadow of Death, whose specter stalks amid the sweetest flowers and gayest places as well as in dark alleys and poverty-stricken tenements.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SERPENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE body of St. Cyr lay on the beach for two or three hours while a coroner was sent for to the nearest town, and arriving, viewed the body, which would soon have been moved to keep it from the encroaching waves, for the tide had turned some time ago.

It was sufficiently evident that the murdered man had been approached from behind and fired at by a pistol, and that he had fallen just as he lay and died instantly. In vain the coroner and others endeavored to trace the course of the assassin. The violent rain and the incoming tide had washed out every footprint.

When the question arose as to where the body should be taken, Captain Faye felt the generous impulse to order it to his house, since he had known St. Cyr; but thoughts of the crowds who would rush to the Rookery, and the intense state of excitement such a crowd, from such a cause, would keep up among the ladies of his household, restrained him. The steward of Cliff Castle was on the spot, and offered a room in his cottage, saying that he would telegraph to Sir Caryl what was going on and ask him to return home for a few days to attend to the funeral of his late friend and visitor.

The telegram arrived at Sir John's during the ball, just after the Leons left, and Caryl disclosed its character to his uncle.

"I must start by the first morning train," he remarked. "If I knew who was poor Harley's most intimate friend or friends I would send for them to accompany me. I am sorry to have such horrible news talked over before Lucy. I wish the matter could be kept from her."

"So do I—at least for to-night. I will try to have it so."

And so, Lucy Crossley enjoyed her ball without the shadow falling on her, though she learned, from the papers the following day, why her cousin had gone off before she was up.

Sir Caryl reached Cliff Castle about three that afternoon. The housekeeper had luncheon ready for him and the half-dozen others who flocked around him on his leaving the train at the village.

It was strange to the baronet to be thus taking the lead in the affairs of his dead acquaintance, St. Cyr, who had never been an intimate friend of his, but only a half-welcome guest. Yet, since no one else came forward to perform these duties he took them up.

When he had lunched, he went to look on the dead face, at the sight of which he was more deeply moved than he could have believed.

He ordered all things necessary to a respectable funeral. He then sent for the old fisherman who had discovered the murder, asking of him, as well as of all others who had been first at the scene, many keen and searching questions. His

dislike of St. Cyr, living, did not prevent him from feeling that so dastardly a murder should be punished, and that he would do all in his power to discover the doer.

About nine o'clock that night he was pacing up and down his library, alone. He was nervous and agitated, not alone on account of the murder but also because he was again so near Cicely Faye. Captain Faye had been over during the afternoon; but, of course, had shown little of the hearty friendliness of yore. Caryl felt lonely and depressed. It seemed unnatural not to be able to run over to the Rookery, as had been his custom, all summer.

Cicely's soft, pure eyes haunted him. Everywhere he looked he saw only her lovely, noble face reproaching him, with its gentle pride, for his accusations. How gladly would he have believed her innocent! How fiercely he fought against the impulse to hurry over to the Rookery and beg her pardon! The proofs against her were too strong. He would be making a fool of himself to believe her eyes against the evidence of his senses. So he battled with himself. As he walked up and down the housekeeper knocked at the door:

"Here's Dave Davidge wants to speak to you, sir."

"Let him come in."

A young fellow of the working-class sidled into the room, cap in hand. He was a sort of Jack-of-all-trades to the neighborhood, but lately had been in the baronet's employ, laying up stone wall and doing similar work. Sir Caryl had done him some favors, giving his old mother the use of a little cottage rent-free, and Dave had a fancy for his young master and was always eager to be of service to him.

"How do you do, David? What do you want of me, this evening?"

Dave was twirling his cap around in an embarrassed manner.

"It's about the murder, sir," he answered, without looking up.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Sir Caryl asked sharply.

Dave closed the door cautiously and came close to the baronet.

"'Tis a hard thing to tell, but happen I must."

"Out with it, then. If you really can give me any reliable information I shall be very glad of it."

"Not so glad as you mought think, sir. But, I'll tell what I know. Mind you, Sir Caryl, I've kept it for you, an' when I've turned it over to you, you can do as you like with it. I'll do your bidding about it—none other! If you wants me to tell, I'll tell. If you wants me to hold my tongue I'll hold it. There's a fair bargain, sir."

"Very well. I have confidence in you, David. Go on with your story."

Still Dave hesitated, twirling his old cap round and round.

"Here goes," he began, after glancing about him to make certain the doors were shut, and clearing his throat went on in a loud whisper:

"I was a-going along the beach this morning about eight of the clock, keeping my eyes skinned for a knife I dropped last evening, coming home from the village that way; and jist as I turned the corner of the big rock, you know, sir, I came to a stand-still, fur I seen something as surprised me that much. Some one was down on the sand as if he was dead, an'—an' a 'oman was standing over him, a-feeling his wrist an' his heart to make out he was dead fer sure. As soon as she felt satisfied he was gone, she run away as fast as her heels could carry her, beggin' your pardon, sir, but so it was and so she went."

"Why did you not give chase and arrest her?"

"Cause I couldn't a-bear to," answered Dave, looking down.

"Why couldn't you 'a-bear to,' my lad?"

"Cause, sir, I thought as how you was sweet on her."

"I sweet on her! What are you jabbering about?"

"It was Miss Cicely Faye, sir!"

"Miss Cicely Faye! Be careful, Dave Davidge, what you say!"

"It was her, as sure as Lot's wife turned to a pillar o' salt! I see'd her just as plain, an' plainer, than I see you this minute. She was as wet as water with the rain; her face was white as a sheet; it was Miss Faye—nobuddy else!"

"Do you think she shot him?"

"I can't swear to that. The smell of the powder wa'n't cleared away—she was stooping over him—she got up an' run away:—that much I'll take my Bible oath on. I didn't see her fire no pistol."

"Did she have one in her hand?"

"I didn't see her have none in her hand, sir. What I saw I saw. I won't go beyond that."

"Have you spoken to any one else about this matter, David?"

"Not to a human soul! Says I to myself, 'I'll keep it for Sir Caryl! If he thinks best to 'peach on the young lady, well an' good—let him 'peach. If he thinks fit to keep silence, he can keep silence.' I'm going by your orders, sir; fur, you see, I suspicioned you was sweet on her. She's as nice, pretty a young lady as ever drawed the breath o' life. I'm dumbfounded, an' no mistake. So I leave all in your hands."

"Thank you, David. You have been more discreet than could have been expected. I shall not forget it, in the future. Consider me under any obligation you choose to impose. I will think of what you have told me. I am too surprised—pained—to come to any conclusion tonight. Do me the favor to keep absolute silence about the matter for the present."

"Just what I thought you'd want me to do, Sir Caryl."

Dave stumbled out as he had stumbled in, leavin' the master of Cliff Castle in a frame of mind a thousand times more unendurable than that in which he had found him.

There was not one doubt remaining in Caryl's mind that Cicely Faye was one of the guiltiest of creatures. The theory of the motive of her crime was complete to him. It ran in this wise: She had had a love affair, while at school, with this woman-hunter, St. Cyr. This love affair had been of a compromising nature; when she had gone home she had desired to drop it, because St. Cyr was not a marrying man, nor an eligible parti had he been a marrying man; he, Sir Caryl, had offered her marriage and she had accepted him, with the selfish aim of making a good match; when she found that he had discovered her previous intimacy with St. Cyr, she had thought that St. Cyr had made his boasts; and she had killed him, either out of revenge, or in the hope that, were he out of the way, Sir Caryl might again come forward with his suit, overlooking the past.

This was a very pretty theory, indeed, and probable—from Sir Caryl's point of view!

As he thought it over, his brow contracted, his face set in an expression of stern wrath and contempt, that argued ill for any mercy which Cicely might expect of him. His love for that young, pure-eyed girl seemed to him, that night, like a sail that staggers on a stormy sea and goes down; it perished utterly—was a total wreck.

He said to himself that Cicely Faye deserved, and should have, the same punishment for her crime that a thief or a footpad merited for the same act. He said to himself that in the morning he would go before a magistrate and have a warrant got out for her arrest!

Because his love had been passionate and deep, his condemnation was now severe. He assured himself, over and over, that he would see justice done, though Cicely Faye were crushed.

He was in this mood when he went, very late, to bed. He awoke early, after a little feverish sleep, and his fierce determination to see justice done began to waver.

"One cannot do justice," his thoughts now assured him, "without also doing bitter wrong. Think of that girl's mother! How kind she has been to me! What a gentle, good woman she is! Think of Captain Faye, who has served his country honorably! Can I be the one to bow their proud heads, to break their loving hearts? My God, no! I cannot—cannot! Let the truth come out, if Providence so wills it, but let me not be the instrument."

It was a terrible situation, mentally, in which to be placed.

"I would give ten thousand pounds if David had not told me!"

His trouble was greater than on the previous evening.

As soon as he had breakfasted he went out to walk. He could not remain quiet. The funeral was fixed for Friday, so there was nothing, at present, to occupy his attention.

He went down along the sands, almost without knowing in what direction the "spirit in his feet" drew him. As he came to that jutting rock and passed it, the scene of the murder was before his eyes. Who was that? Great Heaven!

Cicely Faye, with downcast eyes fixed, as by an irresistible magnet, on the spot where St. Cyr fell! He saw that her face was pale and troubled. Her white morning dress flowed about her, in the light sea-wind, like the garment of an angel.

He went toward her with great strides. He felt a sudden fury that she should be there, looking so soft and gentle, when she was what she was! Had her sister or mother been pre-

sent, his lips would have remained sealed. But, to meet her alone, at that place, aroused all the stern resentment of his nature.

She looked up at the sound of his footsteps and their eyes met. She shrank back as if he had struck her a blow.

When she first looked up there was a vague trouble and horror in her sweet eyes, but nothing of guilt; but his gaze had in it such relentless accusation that it was withering. She put up her pretty white hands as if to ward it off.

"Why do you look so?" she asked, helplessly, not knowing what she was saying.

"I cannot look otherwise at a murderer! There was a witness of your deed, Cicely Faye. A person who came around that rock, as I came around it just now, and saw you standing over the body of your victim. He came to me last night and told me the horrible story."

"You believe that I—I—Ah, this is too cruel!"

"Do not be alarmed. Do not exert your talents as an actress! I shall not betray your horrible secret. I have eaten of your father's sausages and I cannot be the one to denounce his daughter. As far as I am concerned, you are safe; but, there was an eye-witness. Let me give you a piece of advice: remain away from the beach. Do not betray yourself."

He turned from her as if she were a person too vile and hateful for him to endure the sight of her. He walked away rapidly. She wanted to cry to him to come back—to say that she was innocent—to explain that suspicious circumstance—but she could not utter a word. Oh, it was cruel!

Cicely began to feel, with cold terror, the serpent of circumstances creeping about her and paralyzing her in its clammy folds.

CHAPTER X.

THE TORTURED SOUL.

THE funeral took place on Friday, and was attended by a large number of persons drawn there by curiosity. Scarcely one of St. Cyr's intimates in London, however, took the trouble to come out to it. He had been a bad man, with whom it was fashionable for young men to boast an acquaintance; but not one among them loved or respected him.

Still, a man as well known as Harley St. Cyr could not be foully murdered as he had been and the matter be allowed to rest as not worthy of inquiry. A reward was offered for the arrest of the guilty party; and a detective came from London in hopes of earning the money.

At the Rookery, as might be expected, it continued the subject of discussion. Captain Faye was honestly anxious that the murderer should be apprehended; since, as he remarked, the safety of others might depend upon such a deed meeting speedy punishment.

Sir Caryl Crossley returned to London the morning after the funeral. He had seen Dave Davidge again and bound him to present silence. After that, he felt, if he would keep his own lips sealed, he must go away; and so he went back to his uncle and blue-eyed Lucy.

Meantime, every hour Cicely felt more and more deeply the mistake she had made in not at once declaring the murder the hour she witnessed it. She began to realize that it might be a fatal mistake.

Her generous impulse to shield Dolores, the unhappy wife of St. Cyr, had made her hesitate, and that hesitation was working most disastrously against herself.

What had that man who had once, but a little while ago, pretended to love her, said to her? Oh, horrible! Must she live and bear it? Must she not assert her own innocence at any cost to her friend?

The very atmosphere of her own home was full of suspicion, whispering—she knew not what! Miss Nugent often smiled at her strangely. The gentlemen began to eye her askance, and to avoid her. She felt it, and yet she could not battle against it. Poor Cicely! Everything went against her.

She had, as we know, concealed her wet garments in a trunk that morning when she came in dripping from the rain. On Saturday, the day after the funeral, Nora being away on some errand, she thought she would take out these things, dry them, and have them ready for the laundry. When she came to open the trunk she found the hot weather had moldered them; and while she was looking at them in despair, wondering what she could do with them, she heard a sound, and looking around, perceived Nora standing behind her, staring at those tell-tale garments to which the sand of the beach clung, telling plainly where she had been in that storm that morning.

"Oh, my dear young lady!" cried Nora, and burst into tears.

"What are you crying about?" Cicely asked, with dignity.

"To look at them things, ma'am."

"Well, you need not cry about that! They are ruined; but they were never very expensive. Take them away to the rag-bag, Nora."

"Listen to me, Miss Cicely; let them clothes be where they are to-day. I'll take care of 'em to-night, when the rest of the servants is abed."

Miss Faye knew, perfectly, what the girl thought; but she could not answer when no open accusation had been made. Indeed, she did not, herself, know what had best be done.

One thing could not longer be delayed. She must write to Dolores. It had sustained her, all through this blighting, terrible trial, to feel that, if the worst came to the worst, Dolores would fly to her rescue.

Dolores would declare her own guilt before she would allow her innocent friend, who had already lost her lover for her sake, to rest under the shadow of a horrible accusation. She sat down to her desk and wrote:

"DEAR DOLORES: I was on the beach that morning—last Monday morning. The thunder-storm drove me to take refuge in 'Boffin's Bower.' I saw all that occurred on the sands. To give you time to escape, and to preserve you from the danger of arrest, I concluded to say nothing of what I had witnessed. But, I was seen entering my room in a drenched condition; it has become known that I was on the beach at that hour; and, worst of all, some person unknown to me, saw me standing over the body—for I did rush down, as soon as you had fled, to find out if anything could be done for him. I have been accused by Sir Caryl, to my face, of the shooting. Others suspect me.

"I know not how this dreadful matter will terminate. I have suffered for you—am willing to suffer all a friend may; but, if it comes that my life is openly periled, or, what is a thousand times worse, my good name—if the idea grows, or the accusation takes shape that I am guilty of the murder of the man whose wife you were, I shall, of course, dear Dolores, look to you to prove my innocence. I am in a most unhappy state of mind, on your account as much as on my own. Certainly, you must feel that I have done all that a friend can or ought to do. I have to think of my dear parents and sisters. It was terribly wrong for you to take vengeance into your own hands; but I will not be the one to blame you, for I know you were very miserable and distracted. If this wretched business goes no further you can depend on my silence. If I send you a message asking you to tell the truth about it, I do not doubt that you will successfully defend me.

"Your unhappy friend, C. F.

"THE ROOKERY, Aug. 1st."

Two long, sultry days dragged by, tedious even to the happy, but heavy and endless to Cicely, before she received an answer to this letter, penned under the stress of dire necessity.

In the privacy of her room, with trembling fingers, she broke the seal of the envelope and drew out the important letter for which she had waited, almost as the prisoner awaits the sentence of the judge.

She grew very pale as her glance ran over the familiar handwriting:

"MY DEAR, DEAR CICELY: Your letter was a very great surprise and puzzle to me. I do not understand it. If you and I had not been all that we have to each other, I should be angry with you, beyond forgiveness. Do you think I did that heartless, horrible deed? Oh, Cicely, Cicely, how could you imagine such a thing of your friend? I am as innocent of it as you are. I know absolutely nothing about it, except what has been told in the papers. I was at a ball when the news came. Papa would have it that I must go, because he was a friend of Sir John Crossley. I was talking with your Sir Caryl, when I heard somebody, standing in front of us, speak of the murder. I thought I should scream. Then I felt as if I were dying. And now, I am ill in bed with the shock, or I should come to you at once for a full talk and explanations. I know, darling Cicely, how much you sacrificed for me once before—that none of this trouble to you, nor your jealous lover's distrust, nor this terrible suspicion would have come upon you but for my folly at school. I know that a more devoted friend never lived. All that I can do, I will do. If the worst comes to the worst, I will proclaim my marriage to the world, for your sake. Yet, if not necessary, for powerful reasons of my own, I would like this unhappy folly of mine to remain a secret. My idea is, that you are nervous and alarmed without cause. I cannot believe that any suspect you of such a crime. I wish I could come to you. Cannot you come to me? I wish you would. Before I received your letter, although made very ill by the news of that man's sudden fate, I was beginning to feel the joy of the release—but, now, I am unhappy for your sake. Write to me again immediately, my darling Cicely, for I shall be looking as soon as it is possible to receive an answer. Darling, I must see you.

Ever your devoted D. L.

"ROSE TERRACE, Kensington, London."

The letter fell from Cicely's nerveless hand; the cold beads of sweat stood on her young brow; she stared about her wildly—she felt as if she were in that iron room of the prisoner

which contracted about him, inch by inch, until he was crushed.

So!—it was not Dolores, after all!

The woman had been strangely like her in gait and movements.

Was it Dolores?

Was this bosom friend of hers seeking to escape the consequences of her rash revenge, by leaving her to endure the consequences?

Poor Cicely was beginning to be suspicious of her friends. Her warm, true, generous, open nature was being chilled and blighted.

She drew a long breath, but she could not free herself from that oppressive weight. Ah! would she ever feel free and light of heart again?

The summons to dinner had sounded some time since; she had not heard it. Nora came to her now, looking sharply at her young mistress's strange expression, as she said:

"The others are all at dinner, Miss Cicely; they will think strange if you do not go down. You're too pale, altogether. I wish you'd allow me to put just a touch of rose-pink on your cheeks, miss."

"That would only make me look more ghastly," answered Cicely, trying to smile. "I did not know dinner was on the table. I will go down at once."

Her tardy appearance drew all eyes to her as she entered the dining-room. She looked so ill that Captain Faye half rose from his chair as if to offer her assistance, but sat down again.

There were black rings about the lovely dark eyes and a haggard expression to a face one month ago as sweet and blooming as any June rose just feeling how pleasant sunshine is.

A covert look passed from one to another about the table.

To his surprise, Miss Nugent informed her host that her visit must end on the morrow:

"The painful events of the week have so shaken my nerves, Captain Faye, that I shall be better off at home. I know I am not fit to be a visitor, so dull and moping as I am growing," and Cicely knew, with inward anguish, all that her spiteful rival of twenty-six meant her to understand—namely, that the Rookery was no longer in good repute with Miss Nugent.

Nor was Miss Nugent the only guest who left precipitately. One after another dropped off, until, by the middle of the ensuing week, none but the members of the family remained at the Rookery—a place famous for its genial hospitalities.

Captain and Mrs. Faye perceived the change in the social atmosphere and could in no way account for it. The fact that a murder had been committed near at hand, on that pleasant beach, where visitors had delighted to wander, scarcely explained matters.

They noticed, too, an alarming change in their pet Cicely, the youngest, the loveliest of their darlings. It must be that she felt the quarrel with Sir Caryl far more deeply than she had allowed them to suppose. They began to feel that they should have pressed their inquiries more closely into the causes of that quarrel.

They did their best to wile the story of her unhappiness from their daughter, but at every attempt Cicely grew wild and fought frantically to keep her trouble from them.

"If you will take me to London, dear papa, all will come right. I must see my dear schoolmate, Dolores Leon. She writes me that she is ill in bed, and desires me to come at once. Will you take me to her, papa? To-morrow?"

Captain Faye, really troubled for Cicely's health, was glad to promise. Wondering if Sir Caryl's presence in London had anything to do with her wanting to visit there, he took her to the Leons and left her there for a fortnight's stay.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG.

SIR CARYL went back to his uncle's with a heavy, heavy weight of care upon his mind. One moment it seemed to him to be his duty to the dead to denounce Cicely Faye. The next, he felt that for worlds he could not be induced to bring disgrace and misery to that kindly and hospitable family in whose midst he had once spent such happy hours. It was no tenderness for Cicely which prevented his becoming her accuser. The passionate love he had felt for her only increased the bitterness of his present detestation.

He did not suspect that the eyes of others were also fixed on the unhappy young lady—that "circumstance, that unspiritual god" had betrayed her—that the guests at the Rookery had, one by one, withdrawn from a house dark-

ened by the presence of a believed-to-be murderer—or that Cicely knew the cause of their departure, and was suffering, alone and unaided, pangs such as few are made to endure.

If he had been aware of these things would Sir Caryl have pitied her? He was a harsh judge, because he had once been a lover. The weight on his mind was not so much because Cicely Faye had done, as he thought, that terrible deed, as it was that he wished to spare her family, and that his conscience drew him in opposite directions.

Lucy saw that he was full of care, and allowed her concern for him to show in the wistful look of her blue eyes. Sir John, at dinner, learned all the particulars known in the neighborhood of the affair; wondered not a little who could have done the murder and what could be the motive; but his nephew did not encourage speculations on the subject. It was Sir Caryl's turn to be surprised when his uncle observed:

"Poor St. Cyr! Death came to him at the wrong time! You know he was fond of telling us that he should be as rich as any of us when his uncle, out in Australia, died. They had quarreled bitterly over some of poor Harley's naughty ways, and the uncle refused to do anything more for him, years ago. But St. Cyr always averred that the money would be his at his uncle's death—for the simple reason that there was no other relative for it to go to.

"I'm going to give up cards, betting, and so forth, and reform, Sir John, when I can afford to do it," he told me, not so very long ago. Well! would you believe it, there is said, in this evening's papers, to be a telegram to the effect that Colonel St. Cyr, of Australia, is dead of apoplexy, and that Harley St. Cyr is willed all of his large property, except a few thousands, left to Charitable Societies. Tell me, now, if this world of ours does not run to cross-purposes!"

"Too bad! too bad!" murmured Sir Caryl.

He had detested the vices of St. Cyr, living, but he pitied his ill-fortunes, dead. The gambler, the heartless scoundrel who had driven more than one pretty poor girl to her grave—the parasite who had lived sumptuously and idly in the houses of his friends, while he sucked at their resources with the sly, vampire thirst of the gamester—was likely, through the suddenness of his merited taking-off, to become exalted to a high place in the memory of his acquaintances!

Lucy turned quite pale, trifling with her *omelette-soufflé*, unable to hear so sad a subject discussed without the shuddering of her sensitive girl-nature. Her cousin noticed it and changed the subject.

But, he could not forget it. The face of the dead man haunted him. That scene where a girl, on the sea-sands, hovered about the spot where the tragedy had been enacted, haunted him. Those two pictures continued before his eyes.

Lucy went into the library, after dinner, to write a letter for her father. None of the three felt like going out that evening, so it had been voted, at table, that they should remain quietly at home. When she had written the letter and had read a column of the newspaper to her father, she observed that he had placidly settled into his after-dinner nap; so she put down the paper and went into the drawing-room in search of her cousin, who was sitting in the corner of a sofa, with drooped head and contracted brows, lost in thought.

He looked up as Lucy approached. It was a relief to him to see anything so bright and pretty as this cousin of his. How very, very fair and elegant and sweet she was! How easy it was to awaken her sympathies! How fond of him she was, already!

She was at that age when a girl's heart, like a rosebud longing for the warmth and sunlight, is waiting to open at the first beam of love which shines on it. He knew it. He had come into that house, careless of how the bud might bloom. Girls' hearts were never broken. Their vanity might be wounded, their affections, never!

If Lucy was such a fool as to fall in love with him, without encouragement from him, why, let her! This was the mood in which he had first come to his uncle's. To-night, his mood had changed somewhat. It was a relief to know that that sympathetic nature and that bright face were so near him. With Lucy's face before him he could drive away those other horrible images.

He motioned with his hand for her to sit beside him on the sofa. They were cousins and had a right to indulge in these small familiarities without any special significance being attached to them.

She took the opposite corner; her soft blue eyes, like a child's or a violet's, looked over at

him shyly. They said, as plainly as words, that she was sorry he was out of spirits.

"Have you made up your mind about going with us to Switzerland, cousin Caryl?"

"I hardly think I shall be able to go."

"Why not?"

"Matters of great importance may keep me in London."

"Then I wish we were going to remain, too."

She spoke impulsively; the next moment a soft pink wave swept over the fair face up to the golden hair; he saw the blush.

"It is so much pleasanter to have a larger party," she hastened to add. "With only papa and I, we shall be dull. I know papa hopes you are going."

"Uncle John ought to have had a son," remarked Caryl.

Again that sweet rose-color ran over the lovely face. It said as eloquently as words—"It is not too late, yet, for that! You might be his son, cousin Caryl, for the asking"—but the misanthrope was in no humor for interpreting these pretty signals.

Still, it was pleasant to be in his cousin's company. It was pleasant to have her devoted to him.

"Sing something, will you, Lucy? I have 'the blues' terribly. I keep thinking of those scenes at Cliff Castle. I shall never want to go back there again, I am afraid. The charm of the place is gone for me—unless," he added, quickly and warmly, "I can persuade a certain sweet girl to go down there with me and keep away the ghosts by her fair real presence."

He had no more meant to say than to fly through the ceiling when he began the sentence. He could not explain to himself afterward what had induced him to make such an idiot of himself. It was only that he was gloomy and lonesome, and that something in the comforting looks of his beautiful cousin had made him think that he could not do without her—would always want her about him. He did not love her—did not care for her—but if any woman in the world was true or pure or unselfish, it was Lucy!

As he made that compromising speech Lucy looked him in the eyes with a sudden glad questioning; then her own drooped and she arose and went over to the piano.

She did not play or sing brilliantly, with passionate power of feeling, as Cicely Faye did; but she had a pure voice, sweet and not very strong, well adapted to ballads; and she sung two or three pathetic ones, her voice trembling a little at first, but gradually growing steady. Caryl remained on the sofa, his eyes shaded by his hand, appearing to listen, but really too much vexed with himself to enjoy the music; while Lucy dared not cease singing, because, in the tremor of her happiness and half-believed-in bliss, she was afraid she might seem to be inviting him to say more.

The situation was relieved by the appearance, one at a time, of several callers, for Miss Crossley was still receiving party-calls from those who had attended her ball. Sir John awoke from his nap and came into the drawing-room. A gentleman sat down by Sir Caryl and began to talk to him about Harley St. Cyr. The baronet could not half listen for the reason that he was watching another gentleman who had just entered and was being received by his cousin.

It was Lord Hautboys, a great favorite in London society, a widower of not quite thirty, though his young wife had been dead three years, and he had two little children. Lord Hautboys was regarded as one of the very best matches in the matrimonial market. Many a proud beauty had shown her preference for him; yet, so far, he had paid particular attention to none. It rather surprised Sir Caryl, then, to note the warmth and deference with which he greeted Miss Crossley.

"A thousand pardons for not paying my respects earlier, Miss Crossley, after the delightful ball you gave us; but I have been laid up with headache the last two days, only venturing out this evening. You do not seem to have suffered any ill effects from the fatigue of entertaining us? I never saw you look more blooming; which was true, for Lucy's delicate cheeks were dyed with rich color and her blue eyes shone as softly lustrous as evening stars.

"He certainly admires her!" thought Caryl; and, so inconsistent is human nature, he actually felt a pang of jealousy because another coveted what he did not prize!

"It is true, so the latest reports run, that St. Cyr would have been a very wealthy man now, if—" the gentleman beside him ran on, but Caryl did not hear half he said; he was strain-

ing his ears to overhear the conversation between Lord Hautboys and Lucy.

"Going to Switzerland!" he heard his lordship softly exclaim. "How delightful! I am going there for my health; leave on Friday."

"The very day papa has set for starting."

"I had considered it a bore—have done Switzerland so many times—but now—shall be charmed—only too happy—fortunate man!"

Caryl could not make out every word; but he heard enough, although, in his other ear some one was saying:

"Doubtless a woman in the case!—always is. They say the police believe they have got a clew."

"What is that?" cried Sir Caryl, turning so suddenly and fiercely on this gentleman that he caused him to start.

"They think they have found a clew, Sir Caryl."

"A woman?" his heart was throbbing so loudly that he lost whatever Lucy and Lord Hautboys may have been saying.

"Yes. They even suspect that she was his wife."

Sir Caryl turned as white as ashes. Conscious of it, he put his handkerchief to his face to partially conceal it.

"A young woman?" he asked.

"Really, I heard none of the particulars. There was a woman took the train that morning, at Cliff village, to whom attention has been called. I do not think much is known of what the detectives are doing. It is not their policy to betray their plans of investigation. What I tell you is mere rumor, you know."

"Of course—of course!"

But, Sir Caryl did not recover his equanimity for some time. When he came to his senses a little, Lucy was singing for Lord Hautboys one of the ballads she had sung for him. His lordship was turning the music and listening with an air of devotion. He remained until the other callers had gone away, said "good-night" to Lucy with an *empressement* which could not escape the attention even of her father, asked permission to call again before Friday, and said something aside to Sir John, as he took leave of him, which brought the old gentleman back from the drawing-room door, beaming with pleasure.

"My little girl has made a conquest already which she may well be proud of," he said, with some exultation. "A good many fine ladies have angled for Lord Hautboys and here he has swum straight into your net, Lucy, unless I mistake the signs. Ha, ha, ha! pretty well done! isn't it, Caryl? When his lordship comes to me I shall make no objections, for he is a deuced good fellow, if not remarkably bright. You may know what to expect when he calls again, my little lady," and he put his finger under Lucy's pretty chin and kissed her, well satisfied.

"Oh, papa, please do not tease me about such things!"

"Tease you? Oho! when a young lord presses my hand and says he anticipates having something very particular to say to me in a day or two, how am I to understand it, my dear? Get your blushes, and your sighs, and your fan, and your handkerchief all ready, my lady! You will need them," and Sir John went off toward the library, turning back to add: "Think seriously of it, Lucy. He is a *very* fine man, and I shall be content with him and his family and fortune—"

"Including his two children," interposed Sir Caryl, sarcastically.

"You cannot hope to do better, my dear," and Sir John went away.

Lucy and Caryl were standing very near together.

She looked up at him with timid expectancy.

He thought of a great many things. He was jealous of Lord Hautboys; yet he remembered how eagerly that personage had welcomed the prospect of being in Lucy's company in Switzerland, while he had tried to escape the duty of going with her and his uncle. Here was a fine opportunity for him to shake off all responsibility for allowing Lucy to fall in love with him, and to turn her over to the man who evidently loved her truly; so he looked into her eager, wistful blue eyes and said, calmly:

"I advise you to accept Lord Hautboys, if he offers himself, Lucy. I think, with your father, that you cannot do better. I am not a marrying man, as you know, and Lord Hautboys doats on the ground your foot has pressed. I noticed him to-night, and I saw how it was going with him. I sincerely believe he will make you happy."

She looked at him in mute amazement for a

moment after he had concluded, and answered him by bursting into tears.

"Lucy!"

Sob—sob—sob.

"Lucy!"

Sob—sob—sob—sob.

"Lucy, what is the matter? Have I hurt your feelings? I said what I thought was for your own best good. Lord Hautboys loves you—"

"And you do not! Oh, cousin Caryl, when you know how I love you! Oh, you are cruel—cruel!"

"Do you love me so much, darling Lucy?"

"You know I do. You let me love you!—and now!"

He took her two dimpled hands from before her flushed face; she flashed an indignant glance at him, and then the blue, wet eyes drooped.

"Can you be satisfied with me, dear Lucy, knowing that I do not love you as a man ought to love the woman he marries, but knowing, at the same time, that I do not love any one else? I would like to make you happy. I like you very much; and your gentle, loving nature may, some day, change me from the hard, distrustful creature I now am. You shall decide for both of us. If you are willing to take me, just as I am, and can be satisfied with me, I will try to be a good husband to you."

She threw her round, white arms about his neck, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"I would rather have you, dear Caryl, even if you hated me, than any other person in the world. I love you."

"I do not hate you," he answered, stroking her hair. "I like you and trust you."

"Will you go to Switzerland with us, Caryl?"

"I will, if circumstances do not prevent."

"Will you try to love me a little?"

He kissed her as she lifted her face shyly.

"She is a dear, good girl, and loves me devotedly," he thought.

But it was not such love-making as that on the moonlit porch of the Rookery, on that June night of roses only two months ago.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHADOW OVER THE HOUSE.

Two pale girls, in a breakfast-room looking out on Victoria Terrace, eagerly scanned the morning paper with two pairs of beautiful but feverishly-bright eyes. Señor Leon had laid the *Times* down by his plate and gone off on his day's affairs, leaving Dolores and her fair guest from the Rookery, to seize upon and devour the scrap of news which he—totally ignorant of the great interest it had for them—had read out a few minutes before—news of which we have heard a rumor the previous evening at Sir John's—that the murdered gentleman, Harley St. Cyr, had fallen heir to a large fortune left him by an uncle who had died in Australia.

The paper added that, by a singular coincidence, uncle and nephew had died on the same day. It also remarked that no near heirs remained, though, doubtless, as was generally the case, dozens would present themselves who had never before been heard of.

Dolores Leon had been made very ill by St. Cyr's death—be the reason what it might. Her friend's visit had revived her more than any medicine, and she had come down to breakfast this second day of it, for the first time she had left her room after being brought home from Sir John Crossley's, the evening of the ball. And now that the great shock was over, there was more life and hope about her than there had been since her father's failure, months before. She was still pale and languid with what she had endured; but her expression was more natural and girlish. Cicely Faye, on the contrary, looked ill and haggard. Her eyes were preternaturally bright; there were black shadows around them, and her young face had a stricken, waiting look like that of one who has heard bad tidings and is momentarily expecting worse.

The little breakfast-room was one of a suite of modest apartments which Señor Leon had rented. His own magnificent house and furniture had gone from him into the hands of creditors. The outlook was pleasant enough; the table was well-served, there were two or three servants to do the young lady's bidding, yet there was a total absence of the splendor which had formerly made the Leon establishment one of the finest in London.

"I thank God daily," said Dolores, looking up from the paper, "that papa's failure caused St. Cyr to betray his true character in time, so that I never was his wife except in name. When I went in disguise, on my return from Porto Rico, to try to gain an interview with him in the vi-

cinity of Cliff Castle—and you came down on the sands to meet me, and scolded me so for running the risk of being detected wearing boy's clothes, and that pretty little mustache glued to my upper lip—my only errand, as you know, was to beg and entreat of him to free me legally from the bonds I had enchain'd myself with. You remember that morning, Cicely?"

"I have reason to remember it," was the sad answer. "That morning proved Sir Caryl's faith in me. He saw the meeting between us—of course he mistook you for one of his own sex, and demanded an explanation in terms so haughty and insulting that I refused to give it. We broke off our engagement then and there. Since then, so singularly have all the circumstances been against me, he is convinced that no creature in the world is so guilty as I."

"Why do you not send for him, Cicely, and have a complete explanation? You can meet here, when I will come forward as witness to the part I played, tell him my miserable story, and thus entirely exculpate you. It makes me very unhappy to know the suffering I have caused you both."

"He does not suffer!" cried Cicely, almost harshly. "It is only I who suffer. Explain to him—never! Explain, to a man who could believe me false, impure, ay, even a murderer! Never! never! If he should get down on his knees to me now, I never would have anything to say to him. Think of it, Dolores!—a girl engaged to one man and meeting another by stealth! A murderer! He has accused me of all this! No repentance on his part can ever blot out those fatal facts."

"And it is all my fault! Cicely, I cannot endure to think of it! If you will not consent to an interview, I, at least, shall find a way to see him and tell him the truth. I shall be guilty of the basest ingratitude if I do less than that."

"Listen to me, Dolores. Sir Caryl has proved that he is of a suspicious nature. Go to him, tell him that you were St. Cyr's wife—that you met him on the beach there, twice—prove that to him, and what will he say?—why! that you murdered him! That you are the guilty woman! All who hear your story will believe that you are the one. Why, darling, even I, who love you so, thought it was you who did the deed which I saw done with my own eyes! It was a woman, tall and slim, as you are. I believed it to be you. Otherwise I should at once have run home with the news and set people on her track. I kept silent, to shield you. By that silence I am now involved in suspicious complications. All we can do, dear Dolores, is to remain quiet and allow matters to take their course. If I am openly accused and arrested then it will be time for you to come forward, and I shall expect you to do it. Otherwise keep still—say nothing—do nothing! Dolores, who could have done that deed?"

The two girls stared into each other's eyes a moment. Those of Dolores were the first to turn away.

"How do we know? He was a bad man. He may have injured other women more than he did me. Some girl may have avenged her wrongs. Or, as he was a gambler, some man may have been ruined by him, and in his desperation—"

"But, it was a woman. I saw her."

"Well! Sir Caryl once saw that I was a man when I kissed you. This feminine attire may have been a disguise. You say she was tall?"

"And too slender for a man. Still—"

"Still, we know nothing about it, really. If it were not that you, dear Cicely, seem to be under the ban, I should be the happiest woman in the world! I have not told you about my visit in Porto Rico! Well, some day soon I will tell you all."

"I hope you may be very happy, I am sure," said Cicely, but she said it a little drearily and bitterly. "I feel, Dolores, that both of us are standing over a mine which may be fired at any moment."

The great dark eyes of the Spanish girl opened wide with a look of fright:

"Can it be possible that either of us is in any real danger, Cicely? How can innocent people be really in danger?"

"They often are. There is plenty of circumstantial evidence against one or the other of us. People have been hanged on less."

"Hanged!"—every particle of color died slowly out of Dolores's rich olive skin, leaving it the hue of old ivory. "How horrible!"

The whole room seemed to take up the ghastly whisper and echo and re-echo it. A silence followed after it. The servant came in to remove the dishes, and the young ladies, taking the paper with them, went up to their sleeping-room. They sat down by a window.

Cicely was drawn by a strange fascination to watch her friend. She had felt it cruel and dreadful that her lover could have suspected her of a crime; yet she now watched Dolores, conscious, in her own soul, that she, herself, was not entirely free from the suspicion that her friend had lied to her—that her own eyes had not deceived her, and Dolores Leon had been the one who crept up behind St. Cyr, through the tumult of that summer storm, and shot him dead.

Dolores did not perceive the turn her friend's thoughts had taken. She felt awed by the danger impending over them, and, like the weak, dependent creature she was, wanted to talk about it and wring from the braver nature assurance that they were safe.

Then, unable to dwell long on a subject so painful, she put it aside and told Cicely about Martin Marshall, of Porto Rico, painting her lover there with all the glowing colors of her tropical imagination. Poor Dolores! creature of fancy and impulse! incapable of the sublime sacrifices of a nobler nature like Cicely's!—yet, for that very reason, the more petted and indulged by the stronger one.

Cicely listened patiently, though her own spirits were sunken deep in fear and sadness. The more sacrifice she made for this friend of hers, the more she loved her.

"I hope you may yet be very happy, dear," she said, in response to the other's fervid story.

Then Dolores's thoughts came back to her present danger, and she burst into tears and bewailed her fate, crying out that she knew there was something terrible going to happen to her—that she wished she knew the worst—wished she had told her father all, but that she would never dare to, and so forth and so on, until Cicely had to soothe her and coax her into composure.

If Dolores was weak she did not mean to be ungrateful. It came into her little head, as they sat crying and talking, that she would not let Cicely know, because Cicely would forbid it, but that she would see Sir Caryl, herself, and confess to him, under promise of secrecy, her clandestine marriage to St. Cyr, and those meetings on the beach which had involved her friend.

"He surely will not think I murdered my own husband! Alas! it is true, I was at Cliff village that morning! I will tell him so; but I will deny all knowledge of the shooting. I will clear Cicely in his eyes. She shall not be the victim of her devotion to me. I will find Sir Caryl at Sir John Crossley's. Very good!—I owe Lucy a call. I will go there this very day. I will see him, and make the opportunity to ask him to call on me this evening."

Cicely, that afternoon, thought it strange that Dolores should go off for two or three hours to make visits, considering all the circumstances; but she did not say so, and the other kept her own counsel. She was driven directly to Sir John's and found Lucy at home.

"I was so sorry that you were taken ill the night of my ball, Miss Leon. You do not look well, now. Your first attempt to get out!—perhaps you should not have tried; though I am very glad to see you to-day, for we leave London to-morrow, for Switzerland."

"Does Sir Caryl go with you?"

"Yes," and Lucy blushed very sweetly. "Do you know? I am going to tell you a matter which will soon be no secret. Can you guess it, Miss Leon?"

"Not that you and Sir Caryl are engaged?"

"Yes. I know I look happy—I can't help it."

Dolores showed her surprise.

"Since when, may I ask?"

"Since day before yesterday. I would not speak of it to any one else I know as little as you; but I have taken a fancy to you, Miss Leon. I hope we shall become great friends on my return to the city."

Lucy's face was a perfect rose, so sweet and blooming; her blue eyes shone like stars, her dimples came and went—she was evidently very happy.

The sight of such happiness made Dolores secretly indignant. She shortened her visit, and as soon as she was back in the carriage ordered it to return to Victoria Terrace. Reaching home, she flew up-stairs to Cicely, who sat by the window, sadly dreaming, but who rose on seeing Dolores fly in, and looked at her questioningly.

"My poor, dear darling," Dolores gasped, winding her arms about her friend. "He is false—treacherous—heartless! He never loved you! I hate and despise him! He quarreled with you on purpose to get rid of you! He is a flirt—a base, deceitful—fraud! there!"

"What is this all about, Dolores?"

"Oh, I went to call on Lucy Crossley, on pur-

pose to try and see Sir Caryl—for I had resolved, whether you liked it or not, to explain everything to him!—and she came in, all smiles, and the very first thing she tells me is—that she is engaged to him—to Sir Caryl!"

"Engaged? to Sir Caryl?"

"Yes, my poor, deceived darling! She told me so herself!—and they are off to Switzerland to-morrow, to be gone a month. Oh, the false—" But Dolores got no further in her sentence, for the form of her friend drooped heavily in her arms, and she had to lay her back in her chair and ring for her maid to bring water and her vinaigrette—Cicely Faye had fainted.

In the fashionable intelligence, the next morning, was the announcement that Sir John Crossley and daughter had left for a month on the Continent; Sir Caryl Crossley's and Lord Hautboy's names were on the same list; Señor Leon read it out, at breakfast, and Miss Faye, who was eating nothing, listened with set lips and a still face.

Captain Faye called to see his daughter that day, and was surprised to learn that she was as anxious to return home as she had been to come to the city. Judging by her looks, he did not think London air was benefiting her any; so the next day they returned to the Rookery. The captain was glad to be back in his pleasant home.

Yet he had not been in it many hours before he was conscious of some great change. A shadow lay over everything. Lady Graham had been crying, and was pale and distraught; Mrs. Faye wore a look of despair; Lord Graham was nervous and absent-minded—all of them looked at their pet, the pride of the household, sweet Cicely, with a strained, anxious expression.

Poor girl! She read the meaning of the change in a moment.

"They have heard something connecting my name with the murder," she said to herself.

It was true. The dreadful scandal which had been in every mouth in the county had reached the Rookery at last. Not one of his family dared to tell the captain what was the matter, until, in sheer desperation, Lord Graham took him out in the shrubbery and related the miserable story. A man had seen Miss Cicely stooping over St. Cyr's body the moment after he was shot—Miss Cicely had been out in the storm and come in, hiding her wet clothing in a trunk and saying nothing about what she had seen on the beach; Sir Caryl had broken off his engagement with Miss Cicely because he had become aware that she met St. Cyr on the sands, alone.

This, and more, had been floating about in the air, until there was scarcely a person in the neighborhood who did not believe that Cicely Faye was the murderer. They would take no steps to arrest her, because she was Captain Faye's daughter, but they believed her guilty. The London detective would show no such mercy when he got on the track; no one could tell what hour the officers of the law might pass over the threshold of the Rookery.

This was a terrible story to pour in the ear of a man like Captain Faye. He listened in thunderstruck silence, and then marched into the house and called for Cicely.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRETTY COMPANION DU VOYAGE.

MARTIN MARSHALL, of Porto Rico, was enroute for England. He sailed from St. John in the latter part of August, expecting to arrive in Liverpool early in September.

He had never been across that blue ocean which lapped the borders of his island-home, though for two or three summers he had intended a trip to Europe. This year he had determined to carry out his plan. There was something which drew him with irresistible power, though he struggled long and manfully against the terrible temptation. Martin was proud and sensitive. Son of a merchant-prince only, he had twice the pride of a prince of the blood-royal. When Dolores Leon, trembling and pallid, had told him the story of her clandestine marriage, he had breathed no further word of love to her—he had given her up, entirely, forever.

He had asked no correspondence on her going away. The only news he had received about her, since her departure, was the casual mention of her name in the business letters of Señor Leon, saying, "My daughter is well and sends her regards to your family;" or, "My daughter remembers, with great pleasure, her visit to your fairy island home."

Still, although he had given her up, the intense yearning to see her again had never ceased. How much this had to do with his get-

ting off on his trip, at last, he would not admit to himself.

He would never marry a girl who had compromised herself as Dolores had done, even were she perfectly free. He must be the first, the only object of adoration to some fond, pure girl. Foolish Martin! Why was he on the good steamer Havana, flying as straight for England as the bird for its northern nest? "Actions," says the old proverb, "speak louder than words."

There were but few cabin-passengers on the Havana. Half a dozen would count them all. Of course a certain degree of intimacy was established between them—such intimacy as comes from constant companionship, from conversation at table, from mutual interest in the weather; but, which can be disowned at once when shore is touched. There were a coffee-merchant and his wife going over after their two daughters, at school in London. There was a Yankee speculator, who made himself chatty and amusing. There was a Cuban revolutionist going on a mission to raise funds. And there was Mrs. Villamora!

Mrs. Villamora was a widow and had with her an only child, a sturdy boy, five years of age. She was still very young—not more than twenty-five. She was dressed in deep mourning. She was fine-looking and had a willowy figure. Her eyes were generally taken for black; but, in the full sunlight, they were seen to be dark-blue, with long black lashes and large pupils.

She was one of those women in whose company it is impossible to be without a full and dangerous consciousness that you are in the atmosphere of fascination surrounding, like an invisible halo, pretty women of her temperament. She was lovely, languid and passionate. Yet she was very quiet in dress and manner. She received the ordinary courtesies offered by young Marshall—such services as "unprotected females" require on shipboard—with graceful sadness. She made no attempts to press the acquaintance.

But he was drawn toward her with swift fascination. The voyage would have been monotonous without Mrs. Villamora.

The days were hot; but after sundown the sea air was delicious. Everybody remained on deck as late as possible. It was generally midnight before the few passengers sought their rooms.

Martin and Mrs. Villamora had, every evening, several hours of small-talk together. Of course, they were not exclusive. The lady chatted with the other lady, with the Cuban and the Yankee, impartially. She still had plenty of time for low-voiced dialogues with the young gentleman. She was so very grateful—not effusively but intensely—when Mr. Marshall rescued her little boy from tumbling overboard or falling down the hatchway. Martin wondered why she had no maid to take charge of the child and wait upon her—if she ever needed the service of an attendant it must be on shipboard. She was not poor, for she wore handsome diamonds, occasionally, just to show that she had them.

Martin became impressed with the idea that Mrs. Villamora had a history.

And so she had.

A woman withers away unless she can have a confidant. Mrs. Villamora gradually felt impelled to be confidential with Martin Marshall.

That a large part of the strange story she whispered in his ear was a fabrication, did not make her confidence any the less touching and interesting. Martin found himself very much engrossed by it.

Nay, more!—he found it had a vital—a terrible interest for him!

The widening circle of her story touched upon the personality of others who were more to him than this pretty widow was.

As for Mrs. Villamora, she admired Mr. Marshall. Knowing him wealthy and fastidious, seeing him handsome and agreeable, she would have liked well enough to get him in love with her; but, at this critical period of her history, she could give but half her attention to the matter, her mind being very deeply absorbed in some perilous matters awaiting the exercise of her best talent as soon as she should reach England. Meantime, she was not willing to resign all chance of future acquaintance with the young gentleman, and devoted all the powers she had left from the contemplation of her business, to deepen the impression she was making on him. Indeed, so much did she admire Martin that, had it been possible to her nature to love any one, she would have fallen in love with him. She would have liked to marry him so soon as her affairs in England were settled so that it would be discreet to take another husband.

In the early watches of the night, when the splendid stars were indolently blazing in the deep-blue summer sky, and the rosy ring about the wide sea-horizon was long in fading, through dying shades of violet, amethyst and purple, to perfect darkness, Mrs. Villamora, with her big eyes raised steadily to the face of her listener, told him many things about herself.

"How long did he think she had been a widow?" "He did not know." "Not six weeks!" "Was it so?" "Yes! but she had not lived with her husband for four years previous to his death. He was a bad, cruel man, of dissipated habits, too fond of other ladies. He had broken her heart the first two years of their marriage. He hated their child—her lovely boy! When she found it impossible to live with him he refused to provide for her or the child—if she had not possessed a little means of her own she would have had to work or beg. Oh, he had treated her dreadfully! She had ceased to love him long ago. His death was a relief to her. She had no one and nothing to love but her darling little Harley. Ah, but her life had been a miserable failure! No father, no mother, no sister, no brother, no husband—only her precious, precious darling!

"Did he know?—Villamora was not her real name! That was a family name. Her married name was St. Cyr: her husband's name had been Harley St. Cyr. Heavens! how startled Mr. Marshall looked! Did he know St. Cyr, then?"

"No, Mr. Marshall did not know that person—but—he had heard of him. Some friends of his had just mentioned his name, once, and he remembered it because the name was not a common one.

"Was this—this Harley St. Cyr dead?"

"Yes. Had he not heard of the strange thing which happened a few weeks ago, on the west coast of England, near Birkenhead? It had caused a great deal of talk and newspaper report, she believed. Why, she had not heard of her husband's death—being in New Orleans at the time it happened—until two weeks ago! St. Cyr's death had been sudden—and singular. He was murdered!"

"Murdered!"

"Ay. How frightened Mr. Marshall looked! Well, she did not think he had ever heard of such a thing before, he appeared so horrified."

"Who murdered him? And what for?"

The young widow almost smiled; her eyes had the peculiar quality of some animals' eyes—they shone in the dark, at times.

"What for? There was the mystery! It was no thief who had met him in a lonely place and been tempted to do the deed for plunder. He had been deliberately shot, in the morning, as he was walking alone on the sands near the house of a friend. He had not been robbed. How could she tell? Her theory was that St. Cyr had come to that place by appointment and had been killed by some jealous woman: she knew him so well that this, to her, appeared the correct theory."

Mrs. Villamora did not go any further with her story that night, for the reason that Mr. Marshall arose and abruptly quitted her, pacing up and down the deck with hasty steps. She did not know why the story moved him so deeply—whether it was because he had so tender an interest in her, or whether he knew more of St. Cyr than he had avowed.

Mr. Marshall did not act like himself the next day. Had she shocked his sense of propriety by appearing so indifferent to her husband's fate? She did not know. He kept away from her, and was grave and silent.

The next evening he sought an opportunity to renew the conversation. He made no betrayal of his own thoughts, but he encouraged her to talk.

"I shall assume my husband's name on my arrival in England," she told him. "I am going there to assert my legal rights in his property."

"I thought he was not wealthy."

"He was not. He long ago squandered his own patrimony. Curiously enough, on the day of his death a very rich uncle of his in Australia died, leaving him heir to an immense property. That property is rightly his child's. My poor little Harley must not be cheated out of his rights. Of course, I come in for my widow's thirds. But I would do nothing—would scorn to touch a pound of Harley St. Cyr's money, were it not that my boy demands justice at my hands. My boy must be protected—first, in his good name, then in his property. I shall have a world of trouble about it," added the widow, with a heavy sigh.

"Why, madam?"

"Ours was a secret marriage," admitted the lady, in her low, sad tones. "I was very young, without parents, silly and easily fooled. But,

we were legally married, by a clergyman of the Established Church. I have my marriage certificate—I will show it to you to-morrow. Seven years ago, come the twentieth of September, we were married, in a little church in the parish of Cresswell, on the south coast. The record of that marriage is to be found in the books of that country church. The very first step I take, after landing, before I allow any one to know who I am, or what I am about, will be to proceed to Cresswell and search for the record. Armed with a copy of that, which can at any day be verified, I shall declare my relation to St. Cyr and do my best to obtain the property for myself and boy. I have very little interest in life—with a melancholy sigh—"very little use for money beyond just enough for the simplest wants—but I am bound to protect my child. He must be proved to have a legitimate right to the name of St. Cyr, and he must inherit the fortune which has fallen to him—I am determined upon it. No true mother could do less. Am I not right in this, Mr. Marshall? Am I not bound to fight for my boy's rights? His father was cruel and false to me; but my child shall reap good from his inheritance. Tell me you approve of my purpose, Mr. Marshall. It is so pleasant to have the advice of a man I respect. I have been alone—alone—so long."

She laid a velvet hand on one of his and looked up at him with an appealing smile. Martin felt sorry for her. He could guess what her life must have been, wasted on a creature like St. Cyr. He sincerely hoped she might get some compensation for her past sufferings, in the good fortune of her boy.

"There is no one but must approve of your purpose, and wish you success, madam," he answered, gently. "I do not see that you need anticipate any great difficulty. If St. Cyr left a legitimate child, that child will be his heir."

The widow withdrew her hand with another little sigh—this time of disappointment. She had had a great deal of experience with men; and she saw that this one, though sympathetic, was thinking of other things besides the fascinating woman who claimed his pity.

Seeing Martin so young and frank and unsuspecting, she had hoped to make an easy conquest of his heart, by first enlisting his sympathy; nor did she yet despair, though she felt that his mind was not under her control.

Perhaps, had Martin been disengaged as to his affections, she would have had no difficulty at all in 'roping him in,' as it was, the beautiful image of that dark-eyed girl who loved him was ever present between the widow's beguiling and himself.

He had enough to think of. That man who had deluded Miss Leon into a clandestine marriage was dead! That fact alone set his brain to whirling madly. Dolores was free as air! No one, not even her father, knew of her unfortunate escapade. Dolores loved him! Was there any longer an obstacle to their love? Might they not be happy? Could he not now easily forgive and forget her girlish folly? Ay, but—

There Martin stopped, and tried to steady his wild thoughts. Who had murdered this man? There must have been a motive! Who had the most powerful motive? Who was tempted by love, by passion, by despair—

No, no, never! How wicked he was to even have such a cruel thought of the girl he loved!

Yet, it might—

Oh, that the endless voyage were over and he could fly to Dolores and look down into her soul through those two clear mirrors of her beautiful eyes! He could tell if she were innocent by one glance, and then—Pride to the winds! Welcome love! welcome happiness!

No wonder, while his heart was torn by such conflicting emotions, that Mrs. Villamora got small hold upon it.

She was vexed with him; yet she did not let him go.

So the few remaining days of the voyage wore on slowly for both of them, until land came in sight. The lady gave him her London address, begging him to come to see her in three or four days—she should be gone, meantime, in search of that record—and he promised to visit her; the steamer reached her dock, and the two separated to go their different ways.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VISION ON THE BEACH.

LUCY CROSSLEY enjoyed her visit to Lake Geneva and other beautiful places more than she had ever before enjoyed anything. She had constantly at her elbow the man whom she adored. He was elegant, admired, a good traveler, devoted to her comfort, and a companion for her father. Her pride in her fiancé was almost as great as her love for him. She perceiv-

ed that she was envied. That alone was enough to make any girl tolerably happy.

Sometimes the fear that he was not satisfied with her crossed her mind, but she always put it away. Why should he not be satisfied with her? She was fair, good-tempered and rich. She would make him, ah, the lovingest, fondest kind of a wife!

Sir Caryl attended upon her as faithfully as a servant, as courteously as a knight. She scarcely felt the absence of a divine tenderness such as a man puts into every lightest word and action for the woman he really loves. Perhaps Lucy had too much fondness and too little judgment: she did not miss that better portion which was withheld from her.

Their party frequently encountered that of Lord Hautboys. Sometimes they traveled in company or stopped at the same hotel. Lucy felt sorry for my lord, who showed his disappointment. He had taken a great fancy to the gold hair, the large blue eyes, pink cheeks, and arched little mouth, which were his ideal of feminine beauty. He would have been a kind, devoted husband to pretty Lucy Crossley. But she did not realize she was making a mistake.

No! not even when Sir Caryl was all distraught, or glared at her fiercely—as he did sometimes—as if he were weary of her and out of patience with her. She was bound to have the moon after which she cried, though that fair, round globe should turn out to be only a soap-bubble.

As for Sir Caryl, he knew well, two moments after he had spoken those fatal sentences in Sir John's drawing-room, that he had made a fearful blunder. It would be not only awkward but cruel to back out of it, and so he let the mistake run on. It is not half the time that a young man or woman engages himself or herself to marry out of pure love, such as poets prate of. Caryl could never marry the girl he had loved; so he might as well take up with his pretty cousin as any one. He felt the conscious merit of doing an amiable thing by her, no matter what he suffered. Yet he was often frightfully bored by his engagement—tired of Lucy, and her cloying, everlasting sweetness.

He was anxious to get back to England. Without acknowledging it to himself, he wanted to be where he could hear all the news, every rumor, about that murder on the sands. He brooded over it, night and day. In a little less than a month he had Sir John back in London, where they stopped a single day; then the three went on, to spend another month at Cliff Castle, before proceeding to Sir John's country home, further north, for the October shooting.

Sir Caryl told Lucy that he wanted her to see the home of which she was to become mistress at Christmas, and to suggest such alterations or improvements as she fancied—the old place had suffered little change of furniture for a long time, and was somewhat somber in the elegance of its immense suits of rooms.

Of course Lucy blushed, smiled and was delighted.

And so, one bright September day, the three arrived at Cliff Castle.

Lucy had not seen the place since she was a child of seven. She liked everything—the old-fashioned grandeur of the buildings, the 'cliffs' the wind-blown, spray-salted garden, the sea.

Caryl almost wished she would find fault with something; but that was the last thing the happy, amiable girl thought of doing.

She chose, that first day, the suit of chambers she would like fitted up for her use when she became Sir Caryl's wife—a suit of three, large and airy, with long windows opening on balconies almost actually overhanging the cliff and looking off over the wide blue water. Caryl, however, advised her to give these up for another looking out on the flower-gardens.

"You will come here in winter, you know, Lucy, and then the wind will be howling, and these blue waves green and stormy."

And, as ever, the girl submitted to his judgment.

Yet even Lucy, sweet-tempered and easily satisfied, was not pleased with Sir Caryl during the next few days.

He was lost in gloomy reveries. He scarcely noticed her. He paced the sands from morning till night; and, for all she knew, from night till morning. By inviting in some of the country gentlemen of similar tastes to Sir John's, he provided for his uncle's entertainment.

But Lucy wandered about by herself, feeling slighted and uneasy. A few ladies called upon her; she was invited to tea at the Rectory, and to dinner, with the two gentlemen, at the house of a Lord Somebody.

Caryl did not wish to accept this latter invitation, but had no excuse for declining, so they went. It was a large dinner-party.

Lucy was proud of her father; and almost ashamed of Caryl, he sat so silent and stern.

A name was mentioned at last at the sound of which he changed color.

Lucy saw it, for her wistful blue eyes were on his face at the time.

"I thought my old friend, Captain Faye, resided in this part of the country. I hoped to meet him here to-day," observed Sir John to a lady he had taken in to dinner.

The lady, looking startled, answered, after a little hesitation:

"He does live in this neighborhood, Sir John. His place, the Rookery, is not a mile from here."

Then a bluff gentleman opposite interposed:

"It's too bad! too bad for Captain Faye! Is it possible you haven't heard, Sir John?"

"Haven't heard what?"

"That his family is under a cloud."

"Under a cloud? I do not understand you, sir."

"You know about the murder, of course?"

"Harley St. Cyr's? Oh, yes; I knew St. Cyr."

"Perhaps you knew that Captain Faye had a daughter, his youngest, unmarried—a beautiful girl."

"Well?"—the good baronet was fairly flushed with interest.

Lucy Crossley was deeply interested, also; for she had marked a hundred changing emotions fly over the face of the man she loved.

"Have you heard nothing of it?" continued Sir John's informant.

"Nothing."

All other conversation had ceased; everybody was listening, for the topic was still one of absorbing fascination to the whole county.

"Well! it is the general belief that this daughter, Miss Cicely Faye, is the person who shot St. Cyr."

"God bless my soul! A young lady! Captain Faye's daughter!"

"Yes. And, I must admit, the proof against her is damning."

"Has she been arrested?"

"No, sir. Respect for her family—for the captain's brave record—deters people from entering a complaint against her. But the feeling against her is overwhelming. No one goes to the Rookery, nowadays; nor does the family go out, even to church."

"They know the feeling against Miss Cicely, then?"

"Very well. It is a strange affair—very strange."

"Why is the young lady the victim of so serious a suspicion?"

"Oh, there are many circumstances, Sir John! Dave Davidge, a woodman, employed at Cliff Castle, heard the shot fired, and, reaching the scene about two minutes later, saw, with his own eyes, Miss Cicely bending over the body. She has explained to her father that she saw a woman come around the rock, walk up behind St. Cyr, and shoot him, before she could cry out or stir. Now, I leave it to the common-sense of this company," went on the gentleman, growing eloquent, "if Miss Faye, were this story true, would have gone home, taken off her wet, sand-draggled garments—it was storming, that morning—hid those telltale garments, all wet and soiled, in a trunk, and gone down and taken her seat at the breakfast-table, and never said a word, about what she had seen, to any one! She could not—she would not, have done it, sir!"

Sir Caryl grew paler and paler as he heard all this. It was the first he had known about the hidden garments, or the fact that a belief that she was guilty had spread through the neighborhood.

"There are other corroborative circumstances—some of them seem to give a *clew to her motive*," added another of the guests, glancing toward Sir Caryl with a significance which showed him that his name, too, had been mixed up with the scandal.

"I can't believe it, and I will not believe it!" cried the old baronet, sturdily. "It is cruel, fearful! I shall call to-morrow morning on my old friend, Captain Faye. If his daughter is guilty he will need my friendship, all the more—but I cannot believe a young, tender-hearted girl committed that murder."

"We have called at the Rookery, of course," spoke up two or three, "but we were refused admittance. Our sympathy was rejected."

The conversation, from that time on, until the table was deserted, clung to this one interesting topic. Sir Caryl felt those two hours drag by like two weeks. After the ladies had retired to the drawing-room there were bolder insinuations as to the motive of the young lady in kill-

ing St. Cyr. There was a great deal of pity expressed for her.

"No doubt she had good reason for shooting him dead. If some one of her sex had killed him years ago it would have saved many a broken heart. We are all awfully sorry for her family. Why, sir, if it were proved in court that Miss Cicely did the deed, she would be acquitted all the same! St. Cyr was a scoundrel."

Perhaps this feeling explained why Cicely had not been arrested.

None the less she was a ruined girl. For the first time Caryl felt a pity for her that was as keen as the sharpest anguish.

He had despised—hated her. Now he pitied her.

Oh, that the intolerably dull festivities would be over, so that he could be alone with his pain!

Well, they were over at last. There had been a long hour in the drawing-room—a little music, a dance or two, some idle chit-chat—and then he was being driven home, through the pearly moonlight, Sir John sleepy, Lucy silent by his side.

Sir Caryl wrapped his betrothed carefully in her shawls; he was solicitous of her comfort; but he could not talk to her. So the drive home was a silent one, followed by Lucy's immediate going to her room and falling asleep in tears.

Caryl could not sleep. He walked about, out-doors, nearly all night, throwing himself down on a hall sofa to rest, when completely worn out.

A little after sunrise he was out again. His feet took him, almost against his will, down the steep cliff-path onto the yellow sands.

The morning was calm; the sea scarcely sighed; the place was solitary. He wandered on and on, until he found himself in Boffin's Bower, where he flung himself down on the rock and fell into one of his reveries.

Something moving about on the beach, after a time, caught his eye. There was a woman walking there. He shut his teeth together on the fierce cry which tore its way upward from his heart.

It was Cicely Faye, alone, dressed in a long, loose white wrapper. Her little white feet were bare; her dark hair rippled about her, unbound by comb or ribbon. Her face was as white as her dress; its bloom and softly-rounded outlines were gone; her dark eyes had a weird expression as they roved over sea and sky.

She went down close to the water and let the incoming waves steal over her pretty, bare feet, and laughed like a child as they did so. Then she picked up a long wreath of wet sea-weed and twined it about shoulder and waist in a fantastic manner which at once called to the observer's mind poor Ophelia!

"Great God! the child has gone mad!" murmured Caryl.

A cold horror seized him in its icy gripe, as if some monster of the deep clasped him with a hundred slimy arms. He could not move. The sweat stood on his forehead.

Cicely began to move about softly to a dance-measure which she hummed, holding one end of the ragged wreath of sea-weed over her head. Before the young man could break the spell of horror upon him some one else came in sight on the beach.

It was Captain Faye. He approached the runaway quietly, as if afraid she might start to run from him, coming up behind her and slipping his arm about her waist:

"My poor darling!"

She flung away her wreath, casting her arms about his neck and looking up mournfully, her poor, worn face on his bosom—

"Isn't this a sweet place, papa? I am happy out here. There never was anybody killed on this pretty beach, I know. There is no murdered man on this beach, is there, papa?" shuddering. "When Caryl said I murdered him he made a sad mistake. Look! I am a butterfly—see me dance!" and she began to whirl about again in that slow, graceful measure.

Captain Faye raised his eyes to the pitiless blue sky.

"God of Justice, let those who have destroyed my darling, suffer for one day the agony they have brought upon me and mine!" and then the proud man, the hero on the field of battle, burst into tears.

The tears and sobs of a strong man are terrible to witness. Caryl turned away his head—the curse seemed to fall on him.

He had been an accuser, though a secret one.

"My poor child, I will not rest, day or night, until I have made your innocence as clear as sunlight. God will help me to prove it," said the captain, when he had partially controlled his emotion.

He then very gently and tenderly drew his

daughter's hand over his arm and walked away with her.

It was some time before Sir Caryl had strength to crawl out from the Bower and make his way home. That scene on the beach had unmanned him. He was forced to believe in Cicely's guilt, which seemed to him proven beyond a peradventure. But he felt a passion of pity and love for her. He thought of that dear family at the Rookery as if they were of his own blood. Their disgrace and trouble was his disgrace and trouble.

Yet he realized that they would scorn overtures made by him at this late day.

He entered his own house in a wretched mood. Cicely's pale, strange face, he knew, would haunt his soul forever.

A vision of bloom and health and beauty floated down the grand staircase toward him—a vision of gold hair and blue eyes and a fond smile which he was beginning to detest.

CHAPTER XV.

"DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE."

MRS. VILLAMORA—or, as she now styled herself, Mrs. Harley St. Cyr—carried out her intention of visiting that rural church in which, according to the story she told Mr. Martin, she had been married, seven years before. To her dismay and grief she found that this very church had been almost entirely destroyed by fire the previous summer—indeed, by a strange coincidence, only about a fortnight before St. Cyr's sudden death.

This, as she declared to the clerk and curate, was very, very unfortunate for her. Neither of these two gentlemen was the same who had officiated seven years ago, the clerk of that period being dead, and the curate gone to preside as rector over a church in Canada.

She avowed to the new officials her object in coming; declared herself to be the wife of the murdered man; said she was living as a governess in New Orleans when she heard of his death; recited the tale of her husband's persuading her to keep their marriage a secret, and afterward denying it; and ended by a passionate appeal to the clerk to try and remember if he had seen the names of Isabel Juanna Villamora and Harley St. Cyr when looking over the books of the church.

Mr. Jennings, the clerk, assured her that he had never had occasion to go so far back in the records; that he was extremely sorry, but the fire had done its work more completely in the little room where the records were kept than anywhere else—that no books were saved.

"I regret that I cannot be of service to you, madam," he said, politely, while his keen eyes ran over the handsome widow rather boldly. "The property at stake is large, is it not?"

"About £250,000, Mr. Jennings."

"May I call on you at your hotel, this evening, Mrs. St. Cyr?"

"I was going to return to London this afternoon; but will be only too glad to wait until tomorrow, if you think you can afford me any assistance."

"I do not know. There were a few pages, scorched and almost illegible, which I found, where the wind had blown them against the gravestones. I will go home and look those over. I would like to see you again."

"Very well; I will wait, Mr. Jennings."

"I will call upon you, then, at the King's Arms, at six o'clock, Mrs. St. Cyr."

"Thank you, sincerely, Mr. Jennings."

This conversation took place on the little porch over the vestibule to the ruinous old church, the main body of which had been rudely repaired, the front and tower of the building not having suffered much damage. No one heard it but themselves, the curate having retired from the interview a few moments before.

Jennings watched the graceful figure of the stranger as she walked through the churchyard back to the ancient village carry-all, which had brought her there. His sharp eyes blinked in the sun.

"The handsomest woman I've seen this many a day!" he ruminated. "£250,000 is a snug fortune. I hope she may get it! If I could be of service to her, I might get my share of it!"

"Here's a chance, James Jennings, for the exercise of some of that talent which you have prided yourself on possessing! It may be that I am fated not always to 'blush unseen.' I am tired of this rural horizon. Here goes for a wider field. That woman is plucky, sharp, will not stop at a trifles. The stake is immense. Perhaps she was St. Cyr's wife—perhaps not! It is her business to prove that she was. It is my business to help her to prove it. If she promises to do the fair thing by me, I will promise to place my talents at her disposal."

Mr. Jennings was a bachelor of forty, in lodgings. There was nothing to prevent his giving a good deal of attention to Mrs. St. Cyr's claims, and he gave it. For three hours he kept himself apart from others, while his forehead was contracted with thought.

Punctually at six he was admitted to the little inn parlor where the fair stranger awaited him. There was some reserve, at first, about either one betraying to the other some secrets of their character and purposes; but before the interview closed they had come to an excellent understanding, and had together laid the groundwork for a plan which, Mrs. St. Cyr said, must secure her and her darling child justice.

"I dole upon justice; and I feel it my privilege as well as my duty to fight for the widow and fatherless," asseverated Mr. Jennings.

They shook hands on the platform at the little station the next morning, parting excellent friends with mutual interests. Jennings was haunted by a pleasant memory of dark-blue eyes with long lashes, a low voice, a soft hand and a quarter-of-a-million of money. Mrs. St. Cyr, snugly ensconced in her seat in a first-class carriage, as she whirled through the pleasant country, did a great deal of hard thinking, gilded by occasional flashes of memory which recalled that charming companion of her voyage, Mr. Marshall.

"He promised to come to see me," she mused, with a smile. "I am not going to let the acquaintance drop. I must consult him as to what firm of solicitors to employ. I want keen, unscrupulous men who will see me through—that is, if opposition is made to my claims. Very likely there will be no opposition. There are no heirs; at least, I understand none have yet presented themselves. I may have no trouble at all; still, I must be prepared for all things. I think I have done my work securely, thus far."

For a moment her fair brow was knitted by dark, gloomy forebodings; but she forced them back, and when the train rolled into Kensington Station and she emerged from the carriage, it was with a calm countenance.

A cab was in waiting to convey her to the apartments she had engaged in a respectable hotel, and in the cab was her little son and the maid she had engaged to take care of him and wait upon herself.

She knew that she would be an object of deepest interest to every man and woman in the hotel, simply from her name.

The rumor that a Mrs. Harley St. Cyr had appeared from a distant quarter of the world, and was about to set up her claim and that of his child to the fortune left to the murdered man, was already flying wildly about London.

That night our lady devoted to sleep. She wished to be fresh and fair for the visit she expected; so she put away the weight of care she carried about with her through the day, and slept as profoundly as a child.

But, Mr. Marshall did not call upon her the next day, though she remained in all day, expecting him.

Martin, in fact, had forgotten all about her. He was basking in the warm light of Dolores's beautiful eyes, as he had done the most of the time since his arrival in London.

Dolores, one day, had been sitting at the piano in their little reception-room, pale and melancholy, brooding over that delicious visit she had made to that sunny island lying far away in its ring of blue waters, when she was surprised by seeing her father return two hours before she expected him, bringing with him a visitor.

She looked up a little wearily; for she was not in the mood for entertaining friends; but a splendid sun of joy broke through the cloudy night of her dark eyes, and a little cry of rapture burst from her red lips; then, restraining the impulse to throw herself into his arms, she came quickly forward and took Martin's outstretched hand.

Then, with a sigh, she withdrew it, and her long lashes fell over her eloquent eyes, and the blush died on her cheek, for she recalled what this man knew of her history, and how he had let her go without breathing another word of love after she had told it to him.

Martin, for his part, found the living image of the girl he loved even more beautiful than his recollection of her. The wall of pride and prudence which he had built up in his own defense did not withstand, for one hour, the battery of those bright eyes. Long before the hour for going away, he was ready to come to terms.

He remained to the snug little dinner which was served in the modest breakfast-room: the

full splendor of the señor's former style of living could not have added one charm to that simple table; for Martin was in love, and love garnishes a dish more successfully than the wisest *cordon bleu*.

The little party of three lingered long over the dessert talking of the visit to Porto Rico. Finally, the young pair retired to the drawing-room, leaving Señor Leon to his wine, cigar and after-dinner nap.

"Dolores," said Martin, eagerly, the moment the two were alone together, "I know what has happened! I know you are free! Dolores, my own sweet love, there is nothing now to keep us apart! I can love you all I will. Do you still love me? I am answered by that look, Dolores. You love me!—and there is no bar to the blessing of that love. You will be my wife some day—and soon. Yes, darling, I will never go back over that wide sea until you are ready to go with me, my own sweet wife! I have forgiven your childish folly. I do not blame you for being led into a false step by a man as artful as the one you married. I thank God you are free from him! Only assure me that now you love me with a woman's love, and I am content."

"I am sure, Martin, that what I feel for you is true, deathless love. I was flattered by St. Cyr—but you—you I could follow to death as readily as to joy! Whether you love me or not—whether I am to be happy or miserable, I love you. You are my heart's choice—for this world and the next."

They kissed each other, clinging breast to breast for a moment. Then Dolores drew away, saying, sadly:

"I do not deserve this happiness. I am always thinking of St. Cyr. It is horrible to me to think that he is dead! I am quite sure I never desired his death. Yes, even in thought, I am certain I never wished such a fate to befall him."

"Of course not—of course not,"—yet, as he hastily uttered these words, Martin recalled certain terrible thoughts and suspicions which had come to him on board the ship, when he heard of that man's fate, and had even followed him to the door of this house. These suspicions were utterly gone, now; yet he had had them.

"Do you know, I feel that I ought not to marry you, or even promise to marry you, until the murderer of—of St. Cyr—is discovered? You see, I am in danger, every day and hour, of having our clandestine marriage come to light. If it should come out, it will inevitably expose me to suspicion. And 'Caesar's wife,' she added, with a sad smile, "must be above suspicion."

The warm flush died out of the young man's face.

What Dolores anticipated there was every reason to expect would happen. It was even probable that a scandal which would render the whole situation even more deplorable might arise. If this woman who crossed the sea on the ship with him, could prove that she was the first and legal wife of Harley St. Cyr, then any story which might get about, telling of Miss Leon's secret marriage to him, would expose the hapless young lady to the worst of gossip, as well as add the *motive*, should she be accused of his death.

It was true, Dolores had assured him, that she had never been alone with her husband, and he believed her. Would the world believe her? Young as Martin was, he realized that "the world" always gives credit to the worst side of human nature.

"For God's sake, and yours, Dolores, I hope nothing may ever reach the surface about that affair. Still, if it does, I give you my word of honor I will stand by you, like a man—for I love you!"

She flung her arms about his neck, and began to cry.

"I will not have you ruin yourself," she said, firmly.

He soothed and petted her until she was calmed, then said:

"I have a strange story to tell you, Dolores. You will be surprised, even more deeply than I was. Let us sit here by the fire. I hope I shall have time to tell you all before your father comes in."

"There was a lady passenger on the steamer that brought me over, who confided part of her history to me. She is, I should think, about twenty-six, handsome, a widow, with one child, a boy of five. It was she who told me of St. Cyr's death. Then she confessed to me that she was his wife. She told me where they were married, down in the south of England, seven years ago. She heard of the large fortune left to St. Cyr, and she has come over

to establish her own and her child's claim to it. It seems that she was in the United States at the time of the murder, filling the position of governess in a family in New Orleans. It seems her husband misused her and soon abandoned her. Now, dearest, I hope she may be able to prove her story and get her property. If, luckily, no portion of your acquaintance with St. Cyr comes to the surface, all will go well. I hope and pray it may remain as if it had never been."

But a sudden terror filled the heart of the young lady. She clutched him by the arm, and looked at him with wide, wild eyes.

"I am all the time dreading it," she confessed. "I forgot it, almost, when you came; but I am always thinking and shuddering. Do you know?—I have something to confess to you! My dear school-friend, Cicely Faye—who was my *confidante* through all—has been suspected of the—the murder! Is it not dreadful? Her own lover, the gentleman to whom she was engaged, broke with her, because she arranged an interview between St. Cyr and me. He saw her note, asking him, St. Cyr, to meet her on the beach; and she would not explain, because she was too loyal to me. Now, he suspects her of the horrid deed, and she will not say one word in self-defense. She thought I did it. Ah! is it not strange!—terrible! I do not know what to do! They say that Cicely is suspected by many. The only way she can clear herself is by giving to the world a full explanation of my folly, and her part in it, as *confidante*. I have kept silence—allowed her to remain under this ban—and she has been ill—had brain-fever, or something, I hardly understand what; and I have been perfectly helpless and wretched."

Martin listened, growing cold and hopeless.

"This makes a bad matter ten thousand times worse," he said, drearily.

"Ah! it was so fearful to have to tell my father everything—to be arrested for murder, perhaps! I had not the courage. Truly, I would have proclaimed everything weeks ago; but I waited, hoping the real assassin would be discovered by the detectives, and thus dear Cicely cleared, without compromising me. While I hesitated I learned that she was ill, and out of her mind; and I know that her lover is now betrothed to another young lady. But I will tell all, to-day, if you bid me, Martin. I know that I ought to. I will call papa in, now."

"Hearken, Dolores. We will wait a few days, until this new Mrs. St. Cyr says what she has to say. Meantime, I will speak to your father. I will see what can be done. Surely, that poor, innocent young lady shall be freed from suspicion; even if you, my darling, are harmed. I hope, with you, that the detectives will ferret out the real criminal. Doubtless there were dark episodes in the life of Harley St. Cyr which exposed him to his fate. Meantime, Miss Faye should be comforted—assured that every shadow shall be removed from her. You will go to see her, Dolores?"

"Certainly, as soon as her friends will allow it. I have been there twice; but they would not permit me to see her. If Cicely should die I would feel that I had murdered her. Oh, I ought to have told all at once! I never dreamed of such terrible consequences! And Cicely was proud, and would not explain to Sir Caryl, because he had been jealous so soon; and he rushed off and engaged himself, out of spite, to a girl he did not care for—and all goes wrong," quivered Dolores, sobbing; "wrong, wrong, wrong! If it were not for you, Martin, I should wish to be dead! I do want to do right—only I am such a coward. If you will act for me I will be brave."

CHAPTER XVI.

JEALOUS AND FOND.

THOSE were dark days at the Rookery. That summer which had begun so sunnily ended in stormy blackness.

The last rose faded and fell from its airy perch under Cicely's window.

The sea sparkled, the clouds melted into golden fleece, the crisp air of September shook the ivy on its gabled bight; outwardly, the place was as it had been—inwardly, that happy home was in ruins.

That day when Captain Faye first heard that his daughter was suspected, and called her to an interview with him in the library, ended the last gleam of pleasure for the family.

Ah! what a stern, cold face was that the father turned on his child. Cicely could not believe her dear father could look at her that way.

She stood before him with trembling lips and a piteous look in her sweet eyes, which did not droop before his fierce demand:

"What is this I am told, Cicely?"

"Why do you speak to me so, papa? Whatever you have heard I am innocent. Do you wish me to tell you about it, dear papa?"

"All—everything! Do not conceal the least thing. Give me the facts—from the beginning."

"I was out on the beach the morning of the murder. I was upon the cliff in a little grotto I named Boffin's Bower. I have not been happy lately, dear papa, and have often gone out to walk early, because I could not sleep. I saw Mr. St. Cyr come round the rock on the sands. It began to storm, or was storming, and I watched him, wondering at his being there, and I saw a woman come behind him—a rather tall, slender woman, wrapped in a waterproof cloak. I did not dream she was going to hurt him until she stretched out her arm and fired. I screamed, but it was too late."

Here Cicely paused, put her hand to her forehead, and seemed to be recalling the scene.

"You ran down to St. Cyr, and stood by him, trying to do something for him?"

"Yes, papa. The woman—" here she paused again, contracted her brows, and seemed to think about it.

"Well?—the woman—"

Cicely stared at him vacantly.

"I cannot remember," she said, with a sigh. "I put my wet clothes in a trunk. I was sure that Dolores shot him; but she says she did not do it. I think it strange—don't you, papa?"

"Think Dolores shot him? Who is Dolores? Do you mean your school-friend, Miss Leon?"

"I am sure Nora suspects me, but, I tell you it was the woman. People look at me, it hurts me here," pressing her hand to her heart. "Sir Caryl has such a jealous disposition."

"Cicely Faye, why, if you saw that murder, did you say nothing about it when you came home?"

"Papa, please do not be hard upon me. I told Dolores, often and often, she ought not to marry him secretly. I was not there."

"Cicely, for God's sake, look me in the eye!" She sprung to his breast and patted his cheek.

"There, there, there! I knew you would be true to me, papa."

"True to you? Yes, yes, my poor darling! Tell me the whole story, my pet. Try to think just how it happened."

He bent over her, full of awful solicitude.

She burst into a ringing laugh, and patted his cheek again.

"Cicely, Cicely, what is the matter with you?"

"There is a mill-wheel turning in my poor head, papa. It was put into it yesterday. I wish they would take it out again. It prevents my thinking or sleeping. I will tell you all about Dolores, when the wheel stops. I cannot remember it now."

Ay! the cruel conduct of Sir Caryl, the denial of Dolores, the strange looks of her friends, the whispers of her own family, had done their work!—the captain saw that Cicely's reason was affected.

Guilty or innocent, she was no longer brilliant, gifted Cicely Faye, the light, the glory of her father's home, but a poor, mad creature whose future was blighted, whose beautiful eyes, so wistful, so piteous and frightened, were sad to see. Captain Faye groaned aloud, and wrung his hands. She looked at him a moment, then went and sat down by the window where she seemed to lose herself in a long reverie. When her father grew more calm he approached her, taking one of her little hot hands in his:

"Does your head pain you still, my dear?"

She answered him only with that troubled glance. He could not get her to talk any more at that time. She was as gentle as a dove; but she had long fits of silence when she would not speak.

That night the family physician staid long at the Rookery. He got Cicely to tell him about the wheel that turned in her head, giving her so much trouble; he watched her motions, the peculiar expression of her eyes; he made her talk about St. Cyr, the woman, her friend Dolores. His opinion, given to the distressed parents, was that Cicely's madness was that of a mind overstrained at one point—that, while it was not hopeless, it would need rest, quiet, long repose, and tender, wise watching. He promised, at their request, to keep her mental condition a professional secret, and leaving medicine to soothe the nervous excitement under which she labored, he went away.

And so, the shadow over the Rookery came and stayed. That cruel fear that their darling might be arrested gave place to a blessed belief in her innocence and a tender, loving pity which watched over every hour of her darkened life. Notes were made by the family of every word,

however wild or disconnected, which made reference to the murder; and, from these notes, Captain Faye was weaving a connected thread, which, had Dolores Leon been the assassin, would have secured her arrest. Indeed, the captain had all prepared to make the accusation against her—urged by the natural desire to free his own daughter's fame from the dark cloud upon it—when he was brought to a stand-still and made to hesitate, by the rumor which flew abroad as soon as Mrs. Villamora announced herself as Mrs. Harley St. Cyr.

Here was cause for deliberation.

The captain was shrewd, quick to add this to that, keen to infer. The appearance of a deserted wife on the scene was quite enough to arouse his caution and cause him to wait and watch.

Yet Captain Faye, from the broken sentences which had been pieced together, from time to time, as they came from Cicely's lips, had discovered the secret marriage between St. Cyr and Dolores Leon; had been to London and hunted down the church in which the marriage took place—copied the record—had convinced himself that Dolores had met St. Cyr on the beach—that Cicely was their *confidante*—had even proven the fact that Dolores had not been at home in her father's house in London, the morning of the murder, but had come home late that afternoon, after leaving a train which came in from the west, and had dressed for a ball in great haste, at her father's request.

All this the self-constituted detective had discovered; and had felt certain he was on the right track, until the story of the deserted wife and child came to him, through the papers.

At that news, he was disposed to wait.

A father, who has a dear daughter's good name at stake, has a mighty inducement to put forth his best efforts in her defense.

Captain Faye was vigilant, sleepless, quiet, but never-tiring. He made frequent visits to London—and other places.

Not even his own family knew the object of these visits.

Meantime, over at Cliff Castle, there was bustle and change. Before the Crossleys left for the October shooting on Sir John's place, there were many things for Caryl to attend to at the castle. He had planned extensive alterations and improvements, which must proceed, under pressure, if completed in time for his return with his bride at Christmas.

If Lucy judged of his affection for her by the money he was spending on preparations for her reception as his wife, then she had every reason to be content. On the other hand, if she judged by his personal devotion to her, she had every reason to be dissatisfied. He never made love to her. He was kind and courteous—nothing beyond that. He sought no opportunity to whisper sweet nothings in moonlit corners; he made no delicious privacy for the two, in bay-window, porch, or under cover of piano-playing.

He did not even look happy.

Lucy was not over-sensitive. She had a calm, sweet, loving temper, easily satisfied; but even Lucy grew more and more conscious of his indifference to her. Many a tear welled into her blue eyes of which he, lost in brooding reveries, took no note.

At first she had gone to him as freely as a child to its friend.

He was her own dear cousin, who was so good as to allow her to love him all she pleased!

Love made more of a woman of the lovely girl. She began to fear that her heart would always ache if Caryl did not notice her more. She longed for the little vivid blisses and interests of a happy engagement. She wished that she had more pride, so that she might show her cousin that she would not be slighted. Yet she was so afraid of losing him that she dared not resent his indifference.

A stolen kiss, a pressure of the hand, a few moments' stolen chat sought for by him, would have been more to her than the costly boudoir he was building for her, the new velvet carpets, the wall paper from Morris's, the oriel window overhanging the sea.

After that morning when Caryl had seen Cicely Faye come down to the beach, and had learned that she was mad, he grew worse and worse in his moods and his neglect.

Every day Lucy's fair, pink cheeks were flushed with the traces of tears. Sir John, amused and engrossed by the work going on, looked after the improvements and noticed nothing wrong with his daughter.

Lightning sometimes flashes and smites out of a cloudless sky; and sunny natures, like Lucy's, sometimes flash out in a sudden blaze of anger.

"You go down on the beach every morning,

Caryl; yet you never ask me to go with you. I dearly love the beach early in the day."

"I go on the sands to think and to be alone, Lucy."

"Yes. To think how sorry you are that you are going to marry me."

They were walking up and down the drawing room after dinner, Sir John not having abandoned the Madeira and cigars.

Caryl looked down into the lovely girl-face in some surprise.

"Why do you say that, Lucy?"

"Because it is true,"—bursting into tears.

"I hope you are not going to be one of those peevish, teasing women, Lucy! I thought you were sweet and amiable—"

"And a fool!" added she, bitterly.

"Come," said he, a little impatiently, "let us have some music," and he led her to the piano and seated her.

It was the same as saying that he preferred her singing to talking with her. She had hoped secretly that he would coax her, apologize, even make a little love to her; but he had only coldly turned her over to the piano to get rid of her. As soon as she could control her voice, she began, very sweetly and tremulously, one of his favorite songs, while he paced up and down, not far away; but she knew, she knew, she said to herself passionately, that he was not thinking of her or her singing!

It was not a cheerful look-out upon their future.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ARROW TIPPED WITH INCURABLE POISON.

THOSE morning rambles of Sir Caryl's on the beach were not discontinued, nor did he invite his betrothed to share them.

It was the last week of their stay at Cliff Castle; the first of October was to see them on their way to Sir John's country-place.

Why did he walk on the sea-shore morning after morning, and evening after evening? If Caryl had asked himself he could not or would not have answered. It is a way we have of blinding ourselves to what we might see plainly enough, if we only would.

It was the faint expectation of again meeting that fair, mad maiden which drew the young baronet to the place where he had last beheld her. Caryl's feelings, in that hour, had undergone a complete revulsion toward the girl he had loved, and loving, had condemned. He no longer despised Cicely Faye. He pitied her with tender, unutterable pity. He said to himself: "God has punished her for her deceit and coquetry. It is left to me to pity her."

He was not aware that his feeling went much beyond that. He knew that he repented, more and more, every day, that he had rashly yielded to the temptation to let his cousin love him.

He no longer promised himself that he would be moderately happy with blue-eyed Lucy. Her company was becoming irksome to him. Yet, like a weak, hesitating coward—and Caryl was not weak generally—he allowed the preparations for the wedding to go on—ay, even feverishly hurried them.

The engagement was public to the whole country; every one knew why Cliff Castle was being refurnished; Lucy was daily receiving congratulations. It was impossible, Caryl said over and over to himself, as he lay prone on the rock of Boffin's Bower, that he could break off now. Lucy was very, very fond of him. Her friends would justly resent such trifling conduct on his part. It was his duty to struggle firmly against this dislike which was creeping into his heart.

What! dislike a woman so beautiful, pure, amiable, affectionate, as Lucy Crossley?

"I do not like her half so well as when she was only my cousin. I would to Heaven Lord Hautboys had her! They say he is quite disconsolate—does not rally from the disappointment. He is just the man for Lucy!—worships the ground her foot touches!"

Caryl had fine, changeable eyes. They were steel-blue, like the sea under the gray sky, as he gazed solemnly across the watery waste. As his thoughts reverted to one who was never, for a moment, really out of them, they grew dark and troubled; you would have said then they were black eyes.

I could hardly describe the change which a knowledge of Cicely's madness had worked in him. It had by no means convinced him of her innocence. On the other hand, it only deepened his conviction of her sin. It was not strange, he thought, that her reason should have given way from the fearful pressure of remorse and terror. It was her fit punishment. Yet he felt toward her a great, yearning tenderness.

He longed to see her again. He would, had he dared do so, have presented himself at the Rookery; but he knew that he would not be a welcome guest there. The prospect of going North, joining a gay party, hunting, fishing, making merry and marrying, while nothing but distress hung over the Rookery, seemed to him unbearable.

He loved gentle Mrs. Faye as a mother; pretty Lady Graham as a sister; while his heart bled for the proud-spirited captain. Yet he had cut himself off from showing them friendship—he had been first to condemn.

He had heard, with passing wonder, that a wife and child had come forward to claim St. Cyr's inheritance—

"The cause, perhaps, of Cicely's trouble with him," he thought.

The red of the sunrise was yet rosy in the gray rippling clouds and the gray rippling sea, as Caryl lay there with a hot brow and a tired heart. He had promised himself an easy recovery from the wound of loving that which had proved unworthy; yet, every day, he was a man more fatally ill. The arrow of Love had been tipped with an incurable poison.

The consciousness that this was so grew slowly upon him.

"Cicely, Cicely, Cicely!" burst from him, with a great cry.

That instant, as if his passionate summons had raised her from the ground, Cicely's slight figure appeared toiling up the path to the Bower.

Caryl rose to his feet, staring at her as if she were a spirit.

She did not appear alarmed at the sight of him, but paused and looked at him solemnly. He saw that her poor little feet were bare, and bleeding from contact with the sharp rock. He could have wept over them and kissed them, it was so pitiful to see them, in their rose-leaf softness, wounded by the harsh path. She had evidently escaped, as before, in her night-dress, choosing the deep repose of morning to steal from her chamber down to the murmuring, whispering sea.

"Cicely, my love, my darling!"

Caryl did not know what he was saying, nor that he was holding out his hands to her, with a quivering smile, his pale face growing more pale.

"Are you Sir Caryl Crossley?" she asked him, shrinking back a little, her dark, wistful eyes searching his face.

He bowed his head in assent. For once he was ashamed that he was the man he was; for there was something in that soft, troubled glance which accused him of a cruel injustice.

"Then do not call me your darling again," she said, with gentle dignity. "I thought that I was your dear love once, Sir Caryl—long, long ago, long ago—but you broke my heart, and poor papa's heart. You said false things about me—you placed this mill-wheel in my head, which keeps turning, night and day, so that I never sleep now, and cannot think of things clearly. If you had loved me, Caryl, would you have done that? No, no, no!"

She shook her head, looking at him reproachfully.

A bitter groan was the strong man's answer. She pressed her two little hands to her temples, and faintly smiled:

"Are you sorry?"

"My God, yes! Sorry enough! But you did not do right, Cicely! You know you did not do right! I saw the note in which you asked St. Cyr to meet you on the sands!"

"Dolores wanted me to ask him. She said she would be there, and she wanted to see him so much. She was married to him, you see."

"Dolores wanted to see him! Tell me all about it, Cicely"—Sir Caryl's pulse throbbed heavily, his eyes glittered eagerly; but Cicely pressed her hands more tightly to her temples, and her smile grew vague.

"Tell me more about it."

"I will, when my head is quiet. It pains me, and the wheel goes round so fast. If I should sit here awhile and look at the sea, it would get better. It always does my head good to look at the sea. Papa has promised to take me a long voyage very soon now. He is just waiting to find out about this new Mrs. Cyr. For my part, I cannot believe she was his wife—for Dolores was his wife, I know."

She seated herself quite near him and sat perfectly still gazing off dreamily at the wide, quiet ocean.

Caryl was afraid she would take cold; yet he could not at once disturb her; his whole being surged toward her, as the sea to the land. A doubt, terrible in its remorse and joy, was creeping into his mind, that Cicely might have explained matters to his satisfaction if he had ap-

proached her properly. Now, now, alas! was the story never to be told? He had read that mad people never smiled. Cicely was smiling, sweetly and pathetically, as she watched the long waves roll in and break softly on the white sand.

Perhaps, when the sea voyage was tried, she would be restored to reason. Her madness was very quiet and harmless.

Sir Caryl, dumb with anguish, watched the young, worn, lovely face, feeling that all he possessed, even his life, would he give to see Cicely Faye restored to her proper self. He would rather marry her, mad, than any other woman in the world, sane. He would gladly give his time to the care of her. Was she innocent or guilty? It no longer mattered. He loved her!

It was a strange scene for Lucy Crossley to come upon! Lucy had awakened early that morning and was lying thinking over her cousin's behavior—fretting at the consciousness of his indifference—when she heard his step passing her door, and, a moment later, the great hall door softly open and close.

"He has gone to the beach," she cried. "I am going, too. I will meet him there, and I will tell him all I think about our affairs; I will offer to release him from this engagement, which he is already so tired of. I cannot endure this! I am neither a child or an idiot. He must not trifile with me."

She sprung out of bed and quickly dressed herself without awakening her maid. Even in this emergency she selected a blue morning-dress which was particularly becoming to her, and looked at herself in the glass after she had put on her wide-brimmed garden-hat.

Her eyes were very bright, her cheeks flushed with feeling; her beautiful gold hair, hastily braided, hung down her back. "It is so strange I cannot make him love me!" she thought, as she turned from the image of her own exceeding loveliness.

So, Lucy, following her betrothed with a sudden boldness to which only resentment could have driven her, glided down to the beach and followed on until, at the turn by the rock, she came unexpectedly upon that singular scene in Boffin's Bower.

The autumn winds had torn the foliage from the vines which had screened it in summer-time, and she plainly saw her cousin sitting there, staring, with eager, devouring gaze, at a young lady in a loose white wrapper, with long brown hair floating unrestrained down her shoulders.

The scene so shocked Miss Crossley that she hastily retreated.

A young woman, with loose hair and bare feet.

When Lucy had regained the shelter of the projecting cliff, she stopped to press her hand over her fluttering heart.

Her cheeks were blanched, she panted for breath.

Oh, misery, disgrace, despair! Unhappy Lucy!

Who was this wanton, wicked girl sitting beside Caryl?

That Cicely Faye was partially insane was not known to the neighborhood. The doctor and her family had carefully guarded her poor, pitiful secret from the world. So, to Lucy's surprised apprehension, there was no explanation of this strange conduct.

Neither did Lucy know that Miss Faye was the young lady with whom her cousin had once had an *affaire de cœur*. She had never suspected this person as being the one. She had only heard of Miss Faye as one of the many loves of the murdered St. Cyr, and that people thought it possible she was his assassin.

She did not dream, either, who the young woman was by Caryl's side; but she no longer wondered at his frequent and early visits to the beach, and his refusal to take her with him!

In that one astonished, momentary gaze she became aware that the girl was very young—as young as herself—and beautiful—as beautiful as herself!

Poor Lucy had never before realized that such fearful passions inhabited her own calm bosom. It was unladylike to be too much in earnest. Yet, there she stood, the rage of ten thousand evil spirits tearing her heart, frantic with anger, white with jealousy, even feeling the impulse to rush upon and destroy her shameless rival.

Ah! love is a tiger as well as a dove!

One moment she felt that she must return and accuse them to their faces—the next, that she should die of shame to be discovered prying into their conduct. Finally, she burst into a storm of tears; and, after that, grew rather calmer, and walked quickly home.

Stealing into the house unobserved, she crept into her room and flung herself face down, on her bed. There her maid, coming in half an hour later, found her, with red eyes and a white face.

"I got up early and it gave me such a headache, Ninette. I shall not be able to go down to breakfast, I know."

So the maid darkened the room and reported, at breakfast, that Miss Crossley was ill with a headache; and Sir John sent his love, and Caryl a bouquet of rare roses, from the hot-houses, which roses went up to Lucy with her tea and toast.

She burst into tears again when Ninette told her who they came from; then explained that she cried because she was nervous.

Lucy kept her bed until within an hour of luncheon. She was trying to decide what to do before she faced her cousin again. She finally firmly decided to tell Caryl what she had seen—break off the engagement at once, and then ask her father to take her away somewhere.

"I ought to see Caryl before luncheon. I ought not, indeed, to sit at his table or taste his salt again," she sighed, trying to be heroic.

She rung for Ninette, dressed as speedily as possible, and went down to the drawing-room with a faltering step. On the way she met a messenger dispatched to consult her about the walls of the room that was to be *their room* after Christmas—what color would she choose should be the prevailing one?

"Oh, I do not care!" cried the poor girl, involuntarily wringing her hands. "You must ask Sir Caryl. I will not decide," and she hurried on.

She had not taken three paces down the drawing-room when her cousin came to meet her. He took her cold hands, which she feebly attempted to withdraw, saying, gently:

"You are ill, indeed, dear Lucy. There are deep shadows about your eyes, and I never saw you so pale."

Summoning all her strength, she lifted her reproachful eyes to his; but, as soon as she met his kind glance, and the music of his voice melted upon her ear, the feeling that she had to quarrel with him and part from him forever became insupportable. Pride, anger, just resentment, prudence, fled from before one look of those loved eyes.

"I cannot give you up—though I know I ought to," she sobbed, and flung her white arms about his neck.

"Why ought you to give me up, Lucy?"

She had not a word to say. She only clung about him, like a sweet pink rose about a trellis, her fair face dewed with tears, until he led her to a sofa, sat beside her, wiped her velvet cheeks with his kerchief, and made courtesy seem so like tenderness that she was comforted for the moment, and almost persuaded herself that the scene of the early morning was but a dream.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FISHERMAN AND THE LADY.

From his daughter's disjointed prattle Captain Faye's suspicions had all been fixed on her school friend, Dolores Leon. He had been about to take a journey to London with the purpose of seeing Dolores and making her confess her intimacy with St. Cyr and her visit to the beach the morning of the murder. For, by means of persistent, quiet, never-ceasing vigilance and search, he had ascertained that a young lady had been in Cliff village that morning, and departed by the 9-o'clock train, who could be no other than Miss Leon.

The young lady had suddenly appeared at the station, arriving on foot, from over the moors; she had been closely veiled, seemed hurried and agitated, and had taken a ticket for London.

There were many other facts which Captain Faye had hold of. Among these was one of great importance. He had been in confidential communication with an old fisherman, who had a cottage or hut, built out of driftwood and the wreck of ships, a little further down the beach, about midway between the village and the Rookery. He had paid the old fellow to keep silence until such time as he should summon him as a witness.

The fisherman said that, on the morning of the murder, he had been out in his boat since three o'clock, and had come in, at seven, for his breakfast. He had just started his fire and put a fish to fry, when, looking out his little window in the direction of the village, he saw a fine gentleman coming quickly along, swinging his cane, and picking his way along the shingle. He thought it might be one of the gentry at the Rookery, seeing as how the castle was shut up, and thought no more about it, until, the kettle having boiled, he had just put his bit of tea to

draw, and looking again out the window, saw a lady coming along the same path. That struck him as being rather odd, it being so early; so he went to the front window, drew the curtain aside, just a crack, and peeped out. He had a good look at her as she went by. She was a handsome woman, tall and slim, dressed in black, with a thick veil, which she had drawn back. He thought she might be twenty-eight or thirty years old. She looked savage. She did not seem to be out on any pleasant errand. She was frowning in a black way, and biting her lips. She went by, stealthy-like, with long, soft steps. He thought she would get a wetting. It had threatened, all the morning, to storm; and at that time the thunder was breaking overhead and the wind blowing enough to capsize her. She had not got around the turn before it began to pour. It was none o' his business, and he took his breakfast. Lord! how the wind howled for a few minutes! He was just draining his third and last cup when somebody pushed open the door and came in, dripping wet and frightened like. It was the lady!

He would know her among a thousand. She asked him, would he take her in his boat across the cove, to the village beyond Cliff village, Bunegate. She would pay him three prices. He said he would as soon as the wind run down a little. She said it was running down already—it was only a summer storm—and she wasn't the least afraid. "I'm in a frightful hurry," she said; "I want to get the ten-o'clock steamer that touches there. I must get it!" and she shook at him a purse full of gold.

"She hurried me, every move I made, until we pushed off, the sail of my little craft all set, and we flying through the foam like as if the devil were after us—which, no doubt, he were. She sat there, holding on, and never screamed, even when the water went clean over the boat. She was a plucky one!"

"When we was well off from the shore she asked me, 'could I keep a secret?' I said I could, if it were worth my while.

"'Well,' said she, 'I've just shot a man. I'm a murderer. You will hear of it when you go back. But don't you think ill of me, for he richly deserved it. He's ruined men and women enough to fill a church,' says she. 'I've done a good deed by putting an end to his career. Now swear,' says she, 'never to tell of this meeting with me, or anything you know about me—swear it, by the Holy Ghost, and I'll give you a hundred pounds in gold.' 'Supposing I don't swear?' says I. 'You must,' says she, and she whipped a pistol out of her pocket and told me I'd be a dead man in less'n a minute, unless I swore, by the Holy Ghost, not to ever say a word about her, or let on I knew aught about the murder. And so I was took at a disadvantage and had to swear. When she made the oath as binding as she could I had to say it over after her, and then she gave me the hundred pound, sure enough. I can show you the money, Captain Faye, in the till of my chest. I landed her at the quay, of Bunegate, in time for the steamer; and I wouldn't break my oath for anything else in the world but your poor darter, captain. It shows how careful a person ought to be about promisin'. How could I foresee that Miss Cicely would be accused o' that murder, done by that strange woman? When I heerd of that, I prayed to be let off from my oath, and I believe the good Lord let me off; and I told you—and I'll swear to that woman in any court; for I never can forget the look of her face."

There was a perplexing contradiction in the evidence; inasmuch as the murderer went by boat to Bunegate, while the other dark, slim, tall lady took the train. The captain had to make up his mind that Miss Leon had gone to Bunegate, and that there was nothing suspicious about the other lady. He requested the old fisherman to keep quiet and say nothing to any one save himself, while he continued his secret search into the crime.

Affairs had arrived at this stage when the rumor came from London that a wife had put in her claims to St. Cyr's estate. Instantly a new suspicion flashed into Captain Faye's mind. He resolved to be more cautious and vigilant than ever. A wife! That might mean much. But this lady had been in the United States at the time the murder was committed. Had she been in the United States at that time? He would see. The vital interest which he had in the case—the powerful impulse to clear his dear child's name from basest slander—made Captain Faye a detective whom the guilty, whoever she was, might well fear.

It was nearly two weeks since the advent of Mrs. St. Cyr, and the setting up of her claims and those of her child to the St. Cyr property.

Captain Faye had waited until everything should be set well to going. He was now ready to go to London.

The twenty-fourth of September was the day he expected to leave the Rookery.

On the afternoon of the twenty-third Miss Leon came there from London and surprised him with a visit. Her father was not with her; she appeared much agitated; while the very sight of her, coming to him in such evident embarrassment, threw Captain Faye into a tremor of anticipation.

Dolores asked to see him alone.

He took her into the library and locked the doors.

He was as much agitated as she was. He expected nothing but that her conscience had urged her to come and confess her crime to him. And so she did! On her knees, paling and flushing, weeping and trembling, Dolores poured forth the story of her wrong-doing. But, it was not the story he had expected. It was *only* the story of a school-girl's foolish romance and secret marriage, afterward bitterly repented of. She confessed how she had got poor Cicely into trouble by making her the agent of those secret interviews with St. Cyr, on the beach, which had aroused the jealousy of Sir Caryl Crossley, and thus involved Cicely in troubles that should have been only her own. She confessed that she had come to the beach first, disguised in boy's clothes, and that Sir Caryl, seeing Cicely embracing her, had had good reason to feel as he did. She praised Cicely's constancy in friendship—her noble determination to protect her friend from the consequences of her rash marriage—she avowed herself ready to make any sacrifice or reparation in her power, to clear Cicely of the vile rumors which gossip had set afloat. She said that she had told her father all, and that he had sent her to confess to Captain Faye.

"Did she, then, know nothing of the murder?"

"No, ah, no! Was it possible he could suspect her of it? She was as innocent as a babe, of any knowledge of the hideous crime."

"It may be as unjust for me to suspect you as for others to suspect my poor darling," said the captain. "But, whoever the murderer is, I shall never rest until I have ferreted her out. I will give my life to the work," and he looked as if he meant it.

"I pray Heaven you may discover her," cried poor Dolores.

"And now, Miss Leon, you are worn out with your journey and the excitement of this confession of yours. Go to your room and rest until dinner. I am going to London to-morrow, and will be your escort home. I have one request to make of you: before breakfast, in the morning, I want you to go down on the shore with me and call at the cabin of a certain old fisherman who lives between here and the village."

"Go down on the beach!" echoed Dolores, shuddering and turning pale.

He was watching her closely to see how she received the proposition. If guilty, she would blanch at the mention of the fisherman; he hardly considered that to pass the place of the murder would try any woman's nerves situated as Dolores was.

"Are you unwilling to go?"

"Not if you ask it of me, Captain Faye," she tried to speak bravely, but he saw how she shrank and shivered.

"He will know at once, and set my doubts at rest," the captain was thinking. "He says he can never forget her face. He will know if this girl be the murderer whom he took over to Bunegate, or not." He added, aloud: "We must go before breakfast, so as to be ready to drive to the station afterward. If you do not object, I earnestly request your company."

"Very well. I am ready to do anything you tell me, Captain Faye. Am I to see Cicely?"

"I think not, this time. We think she is recovering her mental tone, and desire to avoid all excitement for her. The sight of her old friend might be too much of a shock."

Unlocking the door he summoned a servant to show Miss Leon to her room.

When she met the grave, grief-worn family at table a great lump arose in the visitor's throat which destroyed all appetite. She made a feint of eating, but the tears constantly welling into her downcast eyes, and she was glad when the time came for leaving the table.

She had brought this terrible affliction on the pride of the household! No wonder their hospitality was restrained and unwilling.

At daybreak the following morning Captain Faye tapped at her door. She was up and dressed, waiting for him, and came out immediately.

Her companion found an extra wrap in the hall for her, as the morning was sharp and chilly, and they went out and walked quickly off down the path which led to the cliffs, in almost utter silence. The sea was rolling green and rough, and a biting wind was blowing as they came down upon the sands.

The captain stole a furtive look at the girl as they passed the very spot where St. Cyr fell. She was deadly pale, and shrank close to him; but he had no pity for her—could not afford to have pity—and led her on over the ghastly spot.

Dolores asked herself what he was after.

He gave no explanation, going rapidly on for half a mile or so, over the smooth, wet beach, to where, on a little spit of land, stood a queer little cabin built out of odds and ends.

When they had reached this he turned suddenly upon her:

"Were you ever here before?"

"No, sir, never."

"Well! you do not object to calling on the old fisherman who lives here? I have a moment's business with him."

"Certainly I do not object, if you wish it, Captain Faye."

She was pale and distressed; but showed no desire to avoid a meeting with the occupant of the hut.

Captain Faye knocked at the door.

No answer.

He knocked again—and again.

"He must be off on one of his fishing expeditions; I am very sorry." He went around the little dwelling; there was the boat, her single sail furled; tied up to the tiny dock.

The captain returned to where Miss Leon was standing.

"The old fellow must be oversleeping himself," he remarked.

With that he tried the latch, which yielded, and opening the door he walked into the one room.

The next moment Dolores heard him utter a cry of astonishment, and call to her come in.

"Look here, Miss Leon!"

She followed where his finger directed, and saw a rude bed, and on the bed a rough old man—asleep?—no, dead.

There was no mistaking the stillness of that sunken face.

She echoed the cry her conductor had given.

"He has been foully murdered," said the captain, in a husky, strained voice, looking full in her blanching face.

"Murdered?" echoed Dolores. Then she added: "It seems to me we are hearing that word too often."

"He was stabbed in his sleep, it seems," continued the captain, still watching her sharply. "It must have been done last night, or at the latest the night before."

"Who could have done it?" she asked, mechanically, not knowing that she spoke at all.

"Ay, there's the rub, Miss Leon."

"Was he anything to you, Captain Faye?" she asked, rousing herself.

"Was he anything to you, Miss Leon?" was the curious response.

"No, indeed; I never saw him before. What could he be to me?"

"I do not know. I only know that he was the only person who saw the murderer on that fatal morning, and whose testimony would certainly convict her! He has been put out of the way!"

"How strange! how horrible! Why do you look at me so, Captain Faye? Do you suspect me? You insult me by such a look!" and the native haughty fire of her Spanish temperament flashed out of Dolores's beautiful eyes.

"My poor Cicely has been worse insulted," was the answer.

"This is a cruel, cowardly outrage!" quavered Dolores, bursting into tears.

"It may be," rejoined her companion, "but I shall do everything in my power to detect the criminal. If it were the queen on her throne, I would show no mercy, if it were to clear my daughter from this unjust charge."

His gleaming eye ran over the bed, the furniture—poor, meager table and chairs—and the floor.

Suddenly he darted forward and snatched something from the floor where it lay just beside the bed. The rays of the rising sun, streaming in at the little window, fell over it, and, as it flashed back the light, Dolores saw that it was some small piece of lady's jewelry, set with a diamond. The captain placed it carefully in his pocket, then turned to her—

"Come! Miss Leon, we will return to the house. I will shut up this place and send for the coroner. I'm afraid, now, that I shall not be able

to go to London to-day. But I shall follow you the hour that I am at liberty."

They returned, hurriedly and silently, to the Rockery.

Was the girl who walked by the captain's side an audacious hypocrite? He almost thought so.

CHAPTER XIX.

MADAME HAS A RIVAL.

MADAME ST. CYR, ensconced in elegant rooms in a fashionable West End hotel, was the lion of the day. Very few doubted her story, which she told freely to all her acquaintances.

It was a tale of direful disaster, from beginning to end, to have befallen so pretty and helpless and youthful a creature.

Her father had been a wealthy Creole of Louisiana in the United States. He had sent his motherless daughter to England, to be educated, when she was only eleven years old, and she had been in school there for six years, when she received news that her father had ruined himself by gambling and shot himself in New Orleans.

His fortune was all wasted; there was not enough left to pay her last six months' bills; so she was turned out of school, friendless, penniless, sixteen years old and beautiful. The only kindness her former teachers did her was to get her a situation as nursery-governess in a noble family. There St. Cyr met her. He fell in love with her innocent, childlike beauty. Unknown to the lady of the house, he followed her up with flattering attentions; but she felt that a kind Providence had guided and guarded her, giving her strength to refuse his love unless he proved it by making her his wife. The noble family in which she was governess lived in the neighborhood of a certain church in the parish of Cresswell; and to that church St. Cyr finally took her, and there they were legally married, though so privately that even the family in which St. Cyr visited and she taught did not hear of it, St. Cyr having begged the curate and clerk to keep their secret for the present, under the pretense that a knowledge of it would ruin his prospects with his uncle.

The story of her living with him in London the following winter—no one dreaming of what had become of her and he visiting her only secretly; of the birth of her child; of her gay husband's rapid neglect and cruelty; his desertion; his pretense that the marriage was not a real marriage; of her poverty and broken heart; her flight to the United States with her child; her four years' experience there, spent partly under the protection of the nuns and partly as a governess again; her reading the news of her husband's murder, and borrowing money to come to London and establish her rights—all this, with strange incidents and romantic episodes beyond number—madame told to all who were disposed to listen.

She was able to borrow all the money she needed, on her prospects, and lived extravagantly, and plotted unceasingly to win away the love of Martin Marshall from the girl on whom it was placed.

Her claims to the St. Cyr estate were before the proper Court, and might have been, perhaps, easily acknowledged, had not counter-claims been immediately pressed by a second-cousin of the murdered gentleman, who emerged from some quiet corner of the world at the critical moment, and entered into the fight over the property with all that earnestness which £250,000 are apt to inspire. He scoffed at the idea that this adventuress had ever been the wife of his prudent relative—"the last man on earth," he said, "to have entangled himself in a moneyless alliance with a poor governess." He called upon her to produce the records, the curate who had performed the ceremony—he even broadly hinted that this madame, coming from Heaven knew where and being Heaven knew what, had murdered Harley, for the single purpose of carrying out this conspiracy to defraud his relatives out of a bequest which, she must have known in some manner, was coming to him!

The new claimant was poor; but there were lawyers enough anxious to conduct his suit on the chance of his winning—detectives enough anxious to be placed, like bloodhounds, on the track of this woman, to chase down her past history.

So that Madame St. Cyr, handsome, bold, and seemingly confident, had a hard time of it, in truth, and had need to be wary and watchful.

She did not change color when her favorite friend, Mr. Jennings, of Cresswell—who had come up to London with his yellowed and burnt remnants of the church-books—repeated to her that vile insinuation which her rival had openly

made about she being the assassin. But a singular light leaped out from under her half-closed lashes, followed by a mocking laugh:

"Mr. Jennings, the whole country, over there where the murder was committed, knows who did it. But the guilty one is allowed to keep at home, unmolested by the hand of the law, because, forsooth, she belongs to a family of aristocrats! Since such stories are about to my discredit, it behooves me to demand that the law shall do its duty. I shall see to it that Miss Cicely Faye, of the 'Rookery,' daughter of Captain Faye, retired army officer, related to my Lord This and my Lord That, is arrested on the charge which I myself shall now prefer. I was anxious to spare her; but self-preservation is the first law of life. I have not been idle since I came here. I know what witnesses to subpoena to testify against her. A certain former admirer of hers, a Sir Caryl Crossley, of Cliff Castle, will be an important witness. There is an old fisherman down on that beach who will be another. Her own maid knows enough to condemn her. I am sorry for her—very sorry indeed, for I know Harley St. Cyr's wiles with the fair sex, and that, probably, she was desperate when she did the deed—but I must look out for myself, of course—must I not, Mr. Jennings?"

"Why, of course. As you say, 'self-preservation,' etc. No one but a lady of your exquisite tenderness of heart, would hesitate an instant. If you hang back, I shall not! It is my duty to see that your interests are properly guarded; and not only my duty but my pleasure"—and Mr. Jennings looked very tenderly into the handsome face of the widow, who cast down her bright eyes until the long, silky lashes almost touched her peachy cheeks. "Now, my dear Juliet—may I call you so?—do not allow these matters to deprive you of an hour's sleep. They are in my hands. That you were Harley St. Cyr's lawful wife, no one can doubt after these half-destroyed sheets—how lucky that the *very one* escaped the fire, as by a miracle!—are placed before the court. As to this cousin's impudent charge, that will be speedily confuted by the simple fact that you were not in the country at the time!"

He watched her closely as he said these last words. Was there a tremor of those long, drooping lashes or was there not?

"It will be easy for me to prove that I was in the United States the day of the murder," she answered him.

"You are sure of that?" he asked, still watching her closely. "Since I am such a good friend of yours, anxious only for your triumphant success—my own worldly welfare depending largely on it—it will be best for you to confide everything to me, so that I may be prepared at every turn."

"I have told you the whole truth, Mr. Jennings, on every subject," and her bright eyes were raised fully to meet his. "The only deception in the whole case is the small deception which you and I are practicing together; and which is certainly justified by its being a copy of the fact."

"Certainly, certainly. I view it in that light. I shall feel quite at my ease as to the whole case so soon as I am assured that you are keeping nothing back."

"I am keeping nothing back."

"I believe you. And now, do not pale those rosy cheeks or dull those bright eyes, by fretting about your case. It will go right—for I shall watch it!"

"My obligations to you, Mr. Jennings, are such that mere money will never repay them!" murmurs the widow.

"I hope not," he answers, smiling. "I intend to earn your gratitude, *at least*. And now, I must go to the interview which I have arranged with your lawyer. Shall I tell him about this Miss Faye?"

"Yes. Tell him everything. Or, rather, send him to me. Ask him to come and dine with me this evening at eight. We can talk over Miss Faye then."

Mr. Jennings did not quit Madame St. Cyr's very comfortable sitting-room a moment too soon. She expected a call from Mr. Marshall; and she did not care for the two men to meet. She was in love with Martin. She hoped, if she won the great fortune, to bribe him into becoming her husband. At the same time she allowed this miserable Jennings, whom she despised, to believe that he stood high in her favor.

She had sent for Martin to consult him on some trifling subject relating to her little son, Harley. She had always some excuse for sending for the young man; and he, who was kind and ingenuous, and really looked upon her as a lady who had been ill-used, was always ready to come at her call.

That she knew where Dolores Leon resided, and how she looked, and that he spent all his evenings at her house, Martin did not dream. That she had been secretly, twice, to that part of England where Cicely Faye resided, and had seen Cicely, Sir Caryl, and the spot where St. Cyr was murdered, Martin did not dream. For Madame St. Cyr, while apparently the most open and confiding creature alive, was, in reality, one of the most secretive.

So, to-day, she received him smilingly and conversed with him cheerfully, notwithstanding the fact that her busy brain was seething with an idea which might be the ruin and death of one of her own sex, a young and refined and innocent girl.

She wanted to confer with him about getting a governess for Harley.

Martin did not consider himself the right person to advise her. He never dreamed, in his modesty, that the governess was only an excuse for the handsome widow to send for him, that she might feast her eyes on his face, her ears on his voice, and that he might be compelled to admire her, in the ravishing morning toilet which she had donned for him, of creamy white cashmere, with rose-colored ribbons and stockings.

He was in more than his usual haste to get away from her; for there was a visitor at Señor Leon's whom he had been invited and was anxious to meet—Captain Faye.

He soon excused himself and went away, without the beautiful widow having won from him a tender word or glance.

"I will make him love me!" she cried, to herself, stamping her little foot, after the door closed on him. "I will have no mercy on those friends of his! I will ruin all who stand in my way, but I will win his love! Oh, I am sick—love-sick, ha, ha! Well—I am. Whose business is it but my own? Love-sick as a girl of sixteen!"

"This Cicely Faye is trapped, like some poor, timid hare whose foot is caught in the spring! I never saw a more complete chain of circumstantial evidence: it winds about and about her until, I fear, it will strangle her to death!"

"I see, by the morning papers, the old fisherman has been found murdered. How very singular! What could have been the object? How they will puzzle their wise heads over that!"

"I might explain it to them, if I had the time!"

"And Captain Faye is in town! I must look into that! What brings him here, I wonder? I shall make it my business to find out."

"If he stays long, it will be to be absent when his favorite daughter feels the cold hand of the law taking hold of her hand. How she will shiver! Yet, if she be mad—as they say—what will it matter to her? Why should I be sacrificed to her?"

"The arrest must be made speedily—before those vile whispers of this relative of St. Cyr's are repeated and get about. It damages one only to have such things hinted. They must not be spoken aloud! The arrest must be speedy."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHADOW DEEPENS AND DARKENS.

SIR CARYL CROSSLEY was not ready to leave Cliff Castle the day following the scene on the beach, as had been arranged.

His excuse was, that the improvements were not sufficiently advanced for him to leave them with safety; yet his architect was certainly more competent to look after these than the young baronet was. When two or three days still found him unprepared to accompany them, Sir John and his daughter set out without him for their own place up in the North.

Caryl regretted exceedingly that he could not bear them company, begging his uncle to wait only a couple of days longer; but Sir John, to tell the truth, was bored down there by the sea, and crazy to get at the autumn shooting; also, he had invited at least a dozen guests who were to arrive at Crossley Park on the first of October, and it now lacked but two days of the first.

Lucy could not keep back the bitter tears which sprung to her eyes as Caryl kissed her lightly on the cheek in saying good-by for a few days. Here was the man she loved and was to marry in a few weeks now, who did not prize her company enough to make the effort to go with them on the little journey; for, that his excuse about the improvements was an excuse, and nothing more, the eyes of jealousy were quick to see.

During the journey Lucy was sad and silent. The weather was cool and bright; but she took no note of that or the rich scenery through which they passed. Two changes on the rail, and a drive of a dozen miles in the large easy

carriage which awaited them at their last station, brought them to Crossley Park. Not even when they took to the carriage and were whirled through a most romantic region, with mountains near at hand, high, wooded plateaus, lakes and glimmering waterfalls, did she evince any interest. Her father rallied her:

"My little girl has left her whole heart down by the sea. She does not bring enough of it to give a welcome to her home in the hills. I must tell Caryl about it, ha, ha!"

"I beg you not to do anything of the kind, dear papa! It will not do to flatter the men," she added, trying to smile, for fear her father would wonder at the earnestness with which she had first spoken. "They must be made to guess at our love."

Poor Lucy! what she said was too true! but she had not acted on her own maxim—her affection for Caryl had been too freely betrayed from the very beginning.

The house which stood in the midst of Crossley Park made no pretensions to being more than a roomy lodge.

Very large and rambling it was; but plain and modern—little more than a comfortable shelter for the merry parties who came there, the gentlemen to shoot and fish, the ladies to "tone up" in the bracing mountain air.

Steep hills, wooded to their summits, rose up behind the cluster of buildings; their shadows lay quietly in the still bosom of a long, narrow lake which ran for six miles along, at their foot, west of the house. There were streams for trout and deep, wild woods for game. No wonder Sir John was impatient to reach a spot like this!

Lucy had been passionately attached to Crossley Park when a little girl not yet banished to that French *pension*; now her blue eyes, heavy with unshed tears, roamed listlessly over the well-remembered scenes.

What were the lonely, lovely lake, the wild, gloomy hills, the picturesque forests to her, who saw but one scene wherever she looked?—a cliff by the sea, with a man sitting there, gazing with a rapture of despair and love upon the beautiful girl who faced him.

Lucy had not gathered courage to break off with Caryl; all the same, she could not blind herself to the truth that he did not love her and did love somebody else. What she suffered, you, who have felt the gnawings of jealous love, of unreturned passion, may imagine.

When her fond father lifted her from the carriage, with the red light of sunset falling sharply over her, he noticed how pale she was, and what a weary look the blue eyes wore.

"Is my pet ill? Is there anything wrong with her?"

"Nothing at all, dear papa. I am as well as I can be."

Then the old Scotch housekeeper and her husband came out to welcome the master and to shake hands with Miss Lucy, and to wonder at the pretty, pretty child so quickly grown to be a tall, beautiful young lady.

Sir John had brought with him his valet, his butler and his daughter's maid, also his cook, who all four came up behind the carriage in a covered van which had been sent for them.

It was crisp and chilly up there in the mountains that last day of September. A huge wood-fire roared and spluttered and sent up showers of sparks, on the great stone hearth in the square hall into which Sir John led his daughter. They stood before it a few minutes while her maid went first to Lucy's room with the wraps and small baggage. Perhaps Lucy was over-tired, for, when her father, rubbing his chilled hands and stretching them out to the heat, asked her if this were not glorious, she answered by bursting into tears, and sobbing as if her heart were broken.

"What is the matter, Lucy? I do believe you and Caryl have been indulging in a lovers' quarrel."

"No, no, papa! nothing of the kind."

"Then you are worn out with the journey. You had better go at once to your room. I will see that your dinner is sent to you there. So, good-night, my pet, and do come down bright in the morning, or you will give me the blues."

"To-morrow there will be plenty of company for you, Lucy. The Earl of Claneagle is to bring his wife and daughter. Major Porter will make himself agreeable to you. Captain Jenks brings his daughter; and Lord Hautboys will help you with your music and singing."

"Is Lord Hautboys coming, papa?"

"Yes, I expect him. I had hard work to coax him to come, after your giving him the mitten. I have a great respect for him, and he's as fond as I am of trout-fishing; so I quite

insisted, for I saw, all the time, that he wanted dreadfully to accept."

"On account of the fishing?" asked Lucy. She had ceased to sob, and wiping her eyes, cast a curious, sparkling glance at her father, which made him think:

"I wonder if my little girl is a coquette!"

Jealousy has driven more than one girl into heartless coquetry—it may possibly have brought wicked thoughts even to gentle Lucy.

Meantime, as soon as his uncle and cousin had left Cliff Castle, Sir Caryl proceeded to carry out an idea over which he had brooded; which was, to call at the Rookery and try to make peace with the family there. He went that very morning.

Arrived on the lawn he perceived that some excitement was hurrying the servants and others about the place, as if searching for something. A great pang smote him, for it occurred instantly to him that something had gone wrong with Cicely.

He advanced to the door, where a servant stood, and asked for Captain Faye.

"He is not at home, Sir Caryl. He went to London yesterday morning."

"Can I see Mrs. Faye or Lady Graham?"

At that moment Lady Graham came quickly into the hall. She seemed troubled and hurried; her eyes were red with weeping. Sir Caryl took off his hat, bowing profoundly. She answered his salutation only with a little cry:

"Sir Caryl, do you know anything about Cicely?"

"About Cicely? No, Lady Graham. Has she—is she—has anything—" he stammered.

"Then you do not know! Very well. You and I are not friends, Sir Caryl; but I thought you might have come with tidings. Let it pass," and she turned coldly from him.

Sir Caryl darted forward and caught her hand.

"For God's sake, dear Lady Graham, tell me what has happened? I came here to see your father, and beg his pardon very humbly for any and every wrong I may have done Cicely in my thought. Heaven knows I bitterly repent it. I feel the loss of your friendship, Lady Graham, and of the family's, very deeply. I desire to be friends again—to serve you, if possible. Do not be too unforgiving. You wring my heart!"

He clung closely to her hand, like a drowning man, while his eyes were fixed upon hers with such a look of piteous entreaty that she could hardly refuse to hear him.

"It is too late," she said, solemnly.

"Too late! I know it is too late. I will confess to you that several days ago I met Cicely wandering by herself on the sands and I observed that she was not quite herself. Since then I have suffered torments of remorse. Is there any anguish like that of remorse, Lady Graham? Pity me, then, for I suffer that anguish night and day."

"I have no time to pity you. I think only of my sister. Ah! when will my father reach here? I would that he might fly! the train is too slow. He went to London yesterday—last night, before midnight, Cicely escaped from the house, and we have been unable to find her."

Caryl gave a cry. She wiped her eyes and went on:

"She goes to the beach whenever she gets out of the house. The tide was coming in before midnight, and we fear—we fear, she was swept away—"

"Heaven forbid!"

"She wrote a note and pinned it to her pillow, saying that she was no longer mad, but sane; and that she was going to look after proof of the murderer of St. Cyr, and would return in three days, and we were not to fret about her for she knew just what she was about. She dressed herself in a traveling-suit, took her purse and hand-bag—but oh, Sir Caryl, she is insane—mad people never think they are, you know!—and as we can get no clew to her having gone in any other direction we think she went down to the beach—got bewildered—it was dark, dark, last night—and was drawn in by the tide."

"God help us all!" groaned Sir Caryl.

"You have heard, I dare say, of the murder of the old fisherman down by the cove, two nights ago?"

"I have not heard. I have been busy at home."

"He was stabbed with a penknife. You will be surprised, in more ways than one, when the whole truth about these two murders comes out, Sir Caryl. To think that my poor sister—the purest, the most delicate-minded—ah, how can I stand and talk to you, who were most cruel of all! Go away, sir! Go out of this house which you have helped to make wretched! I would not have my mother come in and see you here, for worlds. The shock would kill her!"

"You are very bitter against me," murmured Caryl, with drooping head, "but not more bitter than I am against myself. I will go at once. But I shall help search for Cicely. You have no right to forbid my doing that. I must do it—or go mad, as she did" striking his hand upon his forehead. "Forgive me, I am going," and he stumbled out of the hall as if he were intoxicated.

When he got out on the lawn he looked up pitifully at the wide blue sky as if asking the Powers above to give him some aid in the search he was about to commence.

Then he dashed away, down to the shore, and stared at the wild, wide waste of waters; but they gave him no more answer than the sky had done. A strong breeze had blown through the night, washing all footsteps from the beach and strewing it with sea-weed. If Cicely had come here she was lost indeed!

He recalled what Lady Graham had said about the note. He wished he had asked to see that note. It seemed to him that he would be able to decide whether it was the vagary of a mad girl, or whether it really meant what it said.

He did not venture, however, to return to the Rookery. He had no desire to run the risk of shocking gentle Mrs. Faye to death. He went home and wrote to Lady Graham begging her to send Cicely's note to him by the messenger, that he, Sir Caryl, might try faithfully if there were not some clew to be gotten from it. After dispatching this, he walked about restlessly.

He did not once think of Lucy.

She was as much out of his mind as if no such person existed, until the cabinet-maker came to him to ask him what the color of the brocade should be for the furniture of the boudoir.

Then he remembered that Lucy wanted it blue, and that Lucy was going to be his wife very soon, and that she had gone away from him with tears in her eyes.

The recollection irritated him.

"I would rather put on mourning than marry," he thought.

"I suppose I am doomed to break Lucy's heart, too."

"What an unlucky wretch I am!"

"I wish I were well over with life."

So he muttered and murmured, walking about from room to room, until he bethought him to take his hat and rush forth to meet the messenger he had sent to the Rookery.

The man returned with a verbal message from Lady Graham that she declined to place her sister's letter in Sir Caryl's hands.

Then Sir Caryl rushed off to the beach again, and there he remained all day, thinking every bit of froth that whitened an incoming wave must be the white garments of his drowned love, and looking to see her laid at his feet.

The next morning there was terrible news for him—news which flew all over the neighborhood, reaching him, among others, while he sat at his solitary breakfast-table, pretending to eat, but only drinking cup after cup of tea to quench his feverish thirst.

The news was this:

The sheriff of the county, with two of his men, had been at the Rookery the previous evening to arrest Cicely Faye on a charge of murder preferred against her by Juliet St. Cyr.

Not finding Miss Faye, the sheriff had left the men on guard at the Rookery, to arrest her, if she returned there, and had sent out officers in pursuit of "the fugitive," as he was pleased to term poor Cicely.

The distress of the family was redoubled—especially as Captain Faye had made no response to the telegrams sent to his address in London, remaining away, for some unexplained reason, when he was so needed at home.

Lord Graham went to London to try and find the captain.

The neighbors kindly said that Faye was assisting his daughter's flight; and that, of course, his family understood it, and their searchings for Cicely and telegrams to the father were all "a blind."

And the shadow over the Rookery was black and threatening.

And Caryl walked by the sea, thinking it would be better if indeed his love was under the hungry foam—forever under

"The cruel, crawling foam."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN CRESSWELL CHURCHYARD.

MADAME ST. CYR had carried out her intention of demanding the arrest of Cicely Faye. But, as we know, when the officers sought Miss Faye, she was not to be found.

That she had run away, and that her father

had connived at her escape, was a natural suspicion on the part of those whose business it is to suspect.

Her friends at home feared that she had been drowned. It seemed very strange to them, too, however, that they could get no news from Captain Faye.

However, just after Lord Graham had started for London, a brief letter was received by Mrs. Faye. This letter was from her husband, and had been mailed at some small station on his route; it bid her not to be alarmed at his absence, as very important business had suddenly called him to the South of England and he could not be home for several days. He did not state where he was going, so that the family could not telegraph to him the new trouble they were in. It seemed to the ladies at the Rookery as if their cup of calamity was brimmed to overflowing.

Meantime, in the little parish of Cresswell, far removed from these excitements, there had arrived at the old-fashioned inn, by coach from the nearest station, a stranger, who registered himself as John Kemp, and who stated that he was an antiquarian, very much interested in all the old buildings of England, especially its churches. He admired the quaint little village very much, and made a sketch, the first morning, of the church. He asked all sorts of questions of all sorts of people, was very pleasant, and very liberal of his sixpences to the poor old women and the staring boys. He made the acquaintance of the sexton, who was in his eightieth year, and of his wife, who was but a year or two younger. The old couple had an ivy-covered cottage at the corner of the churchyard. The good wife was willing to have a friendly chat any time of day with the traveler who had made such a pretty sketch of the church; while the traveler seemed not easily to weary of the subject.

"It is a thousand pities such a fine specimen of the old Norman architecture should have been so injured by fire."

"Ay, ay, a thousand pities, as you says, sir."

"Is it to be restored, Mrs. Hurdle?"

"They say so."

"How did the fire occur?"

"That I cannot tell you, sir."

"It was in summer weather, was it not?—so there could have been no fires in the building?"

"It was this last summer, sir. D'ye mind about that murder of a fine gentleman somewhere on the sea-coast?—well, 'twas a night or two afore that! I remember I said to Mrs. Hobbs, 'Mrs. Hobbs,' says I, 'misfortunes never comes single.'"

"It was in the night the church took fire?"

"It was, sir—it was nigh onto four of the mornin' when Peter, he wakes, with the light in his eyes, an' he rouses me, an' we run out, an' see it a-blazing afore our very eyes."

"Lord! it give me such a turn! The folks was a-running, by that time, and they got the fire out afore it went much furder."

"Did they form no opinion as to how the fire originated?"

"It seemed to have taken in the clerk's room, sir. Some thought he had been smoking his cigar in there, among the books; but he swore he hadn't been in the room since Sunday; an' some thought it might be matches left careless as the mice had gnawed."

"What did you think, Mrs. Hurdle?"

"Me, sir?" she asked, startled, looking up quickly.

Meeting the keen eyes fixed on her face, she looked down again.

"I didn't think nothink," she answered.

The gentleman put his hand in his pocket and drew out ten glittering golden guineas, which he threw in the old woman's lap.

"Tell me all about it," he said. "It will be worth more to me than that, to know."

"How d'ye know I know anythink?" she asked him, in wonder.

"I saw it in your face. Believe me, not the least harm in the world shall come to you from anything you may say."

"I don't know nothink, sir. Indeed I don't!"

"But you suspect."

"Now, you do be a cute one, sure enough!"

She took up the gold and fondled it.

"I'll tell you what I saw an' what I heard. 'Twa'n't much. But, it's been on my mind, since, sir. Either I saw a strange woman on the porch of the church, the evening afore the fire, or I saw a ghost—one or t'other."

"Yes? I am glad to hear that."

"It was this way, sir. I was coming home from the village, where I'd been to buy some snuff at the 'pothecary's, an' I'd staid purty late, gossiping with one o' my neighbors. 'Twas moonlight, an' coming by the church I thought

I seen somethink move on the porch. I've lived that many years alongside o' the churchyard I'm no more afeard of the dead than the living; an' as we have the charge o' things here, I pushed open the gate an' walked up to the porch to see what was there. If I'd believed in ghosts I should 'a' been frightened, sir. There was a tall figure on the porch. It stood quite still when I come up the walk. It was tall, and was dressed in black. It had a white face and two great staring black eyes that looked right through me. I asked it what it was doing there, but it made no answer. It didn't stir, even when I walked up to it and touched its dress, an' that fright'ed me a little, so I ran away. Peter, he laughed at me, when I told him. He was in bed, an' he wouldn't get up to go an' look. After the fire, I thought about the ghost, an' I says to myself, 'the ghost fired the church, and the ghost was a living woman,' fer I felt her breath on me when I touched her. But I held my tongue. 'Twa'n't worth while talkin' about it an' getting reticuled."

"Would you know the woman if you saw her again?"

"Mebbe I would an' mebbe I wouldn't."

"Have there been any strangers about here, since the fire?"

"There was a fine lady here, one day, two or three weeks ago. She come to get the record of her marriage, I believe; but the books was burned. She talked a good deal with Mr. Jennings, the clerk; an' they do say he's gone down to London to stay, now. I believe she's employed him as her business agent or somethink."

"Did you see her?"

"Not very near."

"Was she tall?"

"Yes, sir."

"About the hight of the ghost, for instance?"

"I hadn't thought o' comparing 'em, sir."

"Well, was she?"

"Now you mention it, I should say she was."

"Put the money away in the old stocking with your pennies, Mrs. Hurdle, and say nothing about my having given it to you, or the questions I have asked you. May I walk about the churchyard at my leisure?"

"Ay, sir: an' many thanks fer the gold. 'Twill come good when Peter is helpless, an' the rheumatix is on him sadly, now."

"I hope the money will do you good. I may call upon you again in the morning. Good-evening, Mrs. Hurdle."

The stranger got up from the humble doorstep where he had been sitting and strolled forward, over the stile, into the old yard, set thick with graves for some distance behind and around the church. The sun was setting redly of a clear but chilly October day. The cedars and yews sighed mournfully as they shivered in the red light, drooping over mossy tombs.

The place was very solitary. The stranger was very thoughtful, yet very elate, as he walked slowly about the grassy aisles.

He quite started when he perceived that he was not alone.

A lady, of youthful and pretty figure, sat on a gray tombstone. Her face was turned from him, her hat was in her hand; but, as a twig snapped under his foot, she looked around her, and to his intense astonishment he saw—

"Papa."

"Cicely! My God, child, what are you doing HERE?"

"Papa, come, sit here beside me, and I will tell you. How did you find out I had come in this direction?"

"I did not find it out. I came here on business."

"The same as mine, perhaps, papa!" and she smiled gravely.

He sat down beside her, took her two hands and stared in her face, while a great wave of joy rose slowly and flooded his soul—for he saw something in that pale, worn young face that had been absent from it.

"Look and look until you are convinced," she said, still gravely smiling. "The wheel no longer turns in my poor head, papa! I am all right again, thank the good God, dear papa!"

"All right again, my Cicely!"

"Yes. The hateful illusion is gone. I am your Cicely, just as I used to be. And, papa, that night, two nights ago, when I awoke and felt myself well, there came to me, like a flash of lightning, bringing out the truth, a thought, a suspicion—no, not a suspicion, but a conviction that I could discover the murderer of Mr. St. Cyr. Something told me that if I would come to this spot all would be made clear to me.

I arose and dressed for a journey, wrote a note to mamma telling her not to be alarmed about me, and came here. I took the night train at our station—I do not think any one there no-

ticed me—and when it was the right place to change to another road I changed, just as if I had known the way all my life. I came safely. And here I am, dear papa. I was sitting here waiting to have revealed to me what I must do next, when I looked around and saw you."

"My darling girl! How strange all this is! So, the wheel no longer disturbs your poor brain, my pet?"

"No, papa. Cannot you see that I am myself again?"

Those beautiful, tranquil eyes met his gaze, with the old clear radiance shining in them.

"Thank God!" he cried, catching his child to his bosom. "I can face the world in your defense now, Cicely. I came here to find out, if possible, how it chanced that this church was burned, of all others, in time to destroy the record of a certain marriage."

"Papa, I was thinking of that. But see! what I found in the grass at the foot of this grave! The grass is withered now, by the frost, and, as I approached this tomb, a ray of sunlight struck full on the pencil, so as to cause it to glitter, and I noticed it."

She placed in his hand a gold pencil-case, no one side of which was engraved: "Juliet Henry, Paris, 18—, from H. St. C."

Captain Faye examined it with eagerness. His color came and went.

"It is worth a good deal to know her real name," he said to himself.

He held it in his hand while he and his daughter had a long talk, of keenest interest to themselves.

Toward the close of it the father said:

"You must not go home at present, Cicely. She intends to make the guilt appear yours. She will have you arrested. You must keep away. I came here under the name of John Kemp. You shall be Miss Kemp—my daughter—an artist who wishes to paint the picturesque, half-ruined Creswell church. I will find board for you in some decent family, and you will begin your picture and be very industrious. Does my little girl think that she can live alone a few weeks?"

"Anything you advise, papa."

"Then I will place you as well as I am able, and get away from here to-morrow forenoon. I may be traced here."

As he talked, the captain twisted and untwisted the head of the pencil-case, which finally came off in his hand. He looked into the little tube made to hold the leads, and found it filled with paper. Carefully picking out the paper with a pin he unrolled and smoothed it out. It was a half-sheet of thin French note-paper, covered with writing. The ink was somewhat faded, and the twilight was descending. He could not make out the writing, which was in French, but Cicely's sharp young eyes read it easily: it seemed to be part of a letter, from which the first page had been torn; and, though closely written, was in a masculine hand:

"It seems difficult to make you understand, Juliet, that, when once a man tires of a woman of your class he tires of her forever. Why cannot you let me alone? There are other men, who have far more money to spend on you than I have, whom you can make useful. You are still passably young and very handsome. You have great talents as an adventuress—had you lived in the days of Louis XVI. you might have been a second Madame Maintenon. Let me kindly advise you to try 'fresh fields and pastures new.' As for me, I am a married man—have been married since last March, though the affair is kept strictly private. This renders it impossible that I should yield to your suggestion to wed with you, fair Juliet. I inclose my last £10, leaving myself a few loose shillings. Use it to re-establish yourself as the friend of some luckier man. 'All that's bright must fade'—even old love affairs. I advise you to remain in Paris. If you carry out your threat of coming to see me, I shall be very angry. 'To the wise a word is sufficient.' Let this close our correspondence, dear Juliet, and so, farewell, my fair friend of former days."

"LONDON, June 15th.

ST. C."

"It is very strange that you should have been sent here to pick up the lost pencil, Cicely! It gives me the information most needful. My darling, all will go well with us now!"

He very carefully rolled and returned the paper to its hiding-place, and put the pencil in his pocket book. "There will be a huge sensation in London, some day, Cicely, and you will come out of this as unsold as the angels of Heaven. There is a thunderbolt forging that will strike the adventuress dead. Others will suffer from the shock, too—your poor, foolish friend Dolores for one—but that is necessary."

CHAPTER XXII.

SOFT BLUE EYES.

MORE than a fortnight went by in sunshine and shade over the wild, still beauty of Crossley Park, and the great mountains behind it, over the bright lake at its foot, over the changing woods and the wide valleys that stretched away from it, and yet the one person for whom a pair of blue eyes looked eagerly and wistfully, did not come.

The other visitors had all been there from the beginning. He, who should have been most in haste to seek that spot, came not. Again and again, the carriage, which had been sent twelve miles to the station, came back without him. "It is the improvements that keep him," Sir John cheerfully explained at dinner, evening after evening. "Do not mind it, my pet! It only proves how anxious he is to have all things in order, in season for your return there. That is his way of showing his devotion. And a very sensible way, too, I take it. Caryl is converting the gloomy old castle into a lady's silken bower. Such things take time, my pet."

"Certainly." "Oh, more time than one thinks!" "Contractors never come up to their promises," murmurs the gay company in response, while the young ladies envy Lucy her prospects, and only one out of the little party watches her paling face with keen eyes which read the story of neglect and a fond heart slowly breaking.

Those keen eyes belong to little dark-faced, quiet Lord Hautboys. Every afternoon, when the carriage comes back empty, he shuts his teeth together hard to keep back the contempt for the absent which rises to his lips, while he secretly wishes that he had this Sir Caryl before him, with a fair field and no favor—in which case, little as he was, he would pummel into him some sense of what was due to a lady!

It certainly was a soothing balm to poor Lucy's sorely-wounded pride, to find that Lord Hautboys sincerely admired and respected—ay, still loved her.

And the slender lord, in his chivalric wish to avenge her wrongs, was quite willing that she should thus take comfort. He attended upon her assiduously. He walked by her side in the grounds, rode by her side to the hunt, took her out in his boat on the lake, sat at her hand at table. When he perceived the tears which had formed a naughty habit of welling-up into her blue eyes, he looked away with a sorrowful countenance. His delicacy, his devotion, were worthy of all praise.

But, Lucy loved her cold cousin, and she could not, would not appreciate the worth of this other love, so unobtrusive but inalienable.

Her vanity was soothed, which Caryl so carelessly hurt, but her heart was not touched.

Lord Hautboys did not hope to win her. He would not have permitted her to see that he still loved her had it not been that some refined inspiration of his delicate nature told him that this would be a consolation—though a selfish one—to her.

He had been a married man once, and understood the sex. His love was pure gold—but Lucy did not comprehend that.

Two or three times there came a letter to Lucy from her fiancé.

She would have been ashamed to confess how brief they were—mere notes—saying: "I am still detained, dear Lucy. Cannot say just when I will be able to go to Crossley Park. I trust you do not miss me much, as you have plenty of better company. I hope to see you before many days. Regards to uncle and to yourself from yours, Caryl."

Not very passionate love-letters.

They made Lucy cry, not for joy.

"That girl is keeping him," was her one bitter, miserable idea. "I will tell him so if he ever comes. Why did I not when I was with him? Coward that I am!"

"I will write him a letter. I can write it, when I am as hurt and offended as I am now; but I might fail if I wait to tell him. Yes, I will write and release him from this engagement which is so hateful to him. He is a bad man, too. It was not right for him to be with that young woman on that morning."

"I will not send the carriage again until I get word to expect him," said Sir John, at last.

The morning after, the whole household, nearly, went off on a grand hunt. The ladies, well-mounted, rode hard after the men. Lucy alone chose to remain at home. She meant to write her letter to Caryl, breaking off their engagement. She went up to her room to compose it, as soon as the hunting-party was off.

Drawing her desk to the window she sat there

four long hours, biting the handle of her pen with her pearly teeth, and staring out at the dark, solemn mountains and cool blue sky.

Every now and then great tears rolled down her cheeks, flashing like dew on roses; but she did not write a single line of the indignant message which burned and palpitated in her heart.

She was called to her solitary luncheon, and locked up her desk and went down with the deed undone.

After luncheon she strolled out into the park. It was a little chilly in the house, except where fires were burning; in the sunlight it was pleasant, and she wandered on and on, out the park gates and along the road. The place was so solitary that she felt no fear in being alone; nor did she realize how far she had gone from the house until she suddenly found herself in the presence of a rough-looking fellow, who had been lying in the grass underneath the trees by the roadside, and who rose up and made some familiar remark to her.

Making no reply, she turned about and walked rapidly toward home. He followed her, and the next moment she felt his rude hand on her shoulder, and saw his drunken, leering face close to her own.

"We're all alone here, my beauty, and you must give me a kiss."

The frightened girl gave a piercing scream and started to run, but he held her fast despite her frantic efforts to escape.

His brutal lips, hot with whisky, would have rifled hers, when a mighty blow on the side of the scoundrel's head sent him reeling to his fall. After he was down he was well whipped, and then a vibrant voice added:

"Get out of this part of the country at once, villain, or I will send the servants to drag you off to jail. Up and off! or I will try the virtues of my revolver on your carcass."

"Dear Lucy, there, there, there! Hush your sobbing—really, you are not hurt, you know—

"There is a Providence that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

When I started to walk the twelve miles from the station, I had no idea that I was predestined to rescue you from the hands of this savage. I am glad to be of some service to you, for once, for I have been but a poor knight hitherto, unworthy of wearing your favor on my sleeve, my dear girl."

He had her little hand on his arm and was gently leading her away from the scene of the strife. Lucy wiped her eyes, looked up at him and smiled. This was Caryl—he was here—her hand was in his—he was speaking soothingly to her! She still trembled, but a flood of happiness poured in on her poor, foolish heart. She forgot, as before, everything in the world, but that she loved him.

"I am so sorry you had to walk, Caryl. We have sent the carriage to the station nearly every day."

"I like the walk—it has done me good. I have—I have not been very well."

The soft blue eyes searched his face anxiously. It must be true; for he looked very ill, indeed. He had grown thin and pale, his eyes were sunken and hollow—he had changed frightfully in the short time since she had parted from him. She felt so glad that she had not sent him that accusing letter. She raised his hand to her lips and kissed it.

"Dear Caryl, then you did not come because you were ill, and could not? And you were so careful of me that you would not tell me you were ill, for fear I would worry?"

"No, Lucy, do not give me credit which I do not deserve." He looked about, and saw the trunk of a fallen tree beside the way. "I am a little weary with my walk. Will you sit here beside me, a few moments, while I tell you the exact truth about it? They say that confession is good for the soul; and, certainly, if you and I are ever to be man and wife, you ought to know what I am about to tell you."

They sat side by side; her face had paled, and she shivered as if cold.

"Lucy, since I saw you last, the girl I first loved—you remember, I told you I had never really loved but once—has died."

He paused to get control of his choking voice. Her heart gave a great throb—was it of joy?

"She was subjected to such injustice from me and others—such cruel persecution—that she lost her reason, in a measure, wandered down on the beach at night and drowned. I am going to tell you all about it from the beginning, Lucy."

His deep voice faltered as he told the story of his love for Cicely Faye—his reasons for suspecting her truth—his quarrel with her—the murder—his suspicions—the accusations of oth-

ers—all the melancholy history, as we know it, ending in the belief that Cicely had been drowned.

"When Captain Faye returned to his home, bringing no tidings of the missing girl," he said, in conclusion, "I cannot tell you how I felt, what I suffered; but it was all, all that love and remorse can heap upon a human heart. I was ill in my room for days. I can never again be a happy man. The accusing image of that gifted, pure, martyred girl will haunt me forever. I can never love you, Lucy, as I loved her. Yet I wish to make you happy—to do what is best for you. You shall decide for us. If you are satisfied with me as I am, I am yours. I shall marry no woman unless it be you, my gentle cousin. It is for you to say if you will take up with such a wreck of a creature as I am. Seriously, I advise you not to do it. You will throw yourself away on me. With your youth and beauty you can do better."

A great red leaf dropped down in Lucy's lap from the tree above, murmuring and complaining in the autumn wind.

"I love you, Caryl," was her reply.

She was looking down at the leaf, and crushing it in her rosy palm, so that she did not see the contraction of his brows.

"I tell you honestly I think you make a mistake, Lucy. Well! I shall not quarrel with a mistake that is in my favor. Since you trust me and are willing to take me as I am, I ask Heaven to witness that I will do my best to make you happy."

Lord Hautboys, coming in, triumphant, from the chase, turned pale when he saw Lucy on the porch, her cheeks like damask roses, her eyes like stars, her whole figure expressive of triumph and happiness, standing beside her fiance. He gave his hand in a friendly way to Sir Caryl; but he told Sir John, at dinner, that he must be going on the morrow; and so he did go.

After that Lucy had no more reason to be jealous of her affianced. He was kind, attentive, always by her side. If she missed the sweet bliss of true love-making—if she fretted because Caryl was so pale, quiet, absent-minded, at least, she was not jealous, and she had elected to bear some loss rather than lose him.

The wedding-day was set for the first of December.

When November came, it was so dismal and rainy and lonesome at Crossley Park that Lucy coaxed her father to return to London, saying that she would rather be in the city when "nobody" was there than up in the hills during such weather. Then, too, her *trousseau* needed looking after, and it was decided that the wedding should take place at Sir John's town residence. After the wedding, they were to go to Cliff Castle, there to remain until May.

After they were back in London, Lucy had but three weeks in which to complete her preparations. She was very busy—too busy to have time to consider whether or not she was doing wisely.

Sir Caryl went home for a couple of days to look after matters there. When he returned he was paler, more thoughtful, than ever.

He had learned, when he first came to London, that Mrs. St. Cyr had been placed in possession of the murdered gentleman's property, and had already purchased an elegant house in Belgravia, furnished it in a style recommended by the latest fashion, and was living there in the seclusion of "first mourning"; having easily borne down the pretensions of the "distant relative" who had set up his shadowy claim.

But he knew nothing of the patient, unceasing, vigilant, secret pursuit with which Captain Faye was on the track of Madame St. Cyr's past life; neither did he know how intimately the Leons were connected with the tragedy of St. Cyr. He only knew that Cicely—that one sweet vision of adorable womanhood which had completely satisfied his ideal—sweet, gifted, dark-eyed Cicely, went down to death in the wake of that tragedy; and that he, who loved her memory a thousand times more than all the living women of the earth, was steadily drifting on toward his marriage with another.

And now, indeed, the few remaining days that intervened before his wedding-day wound themselves from the reel of fate with slow, slow dalliance and yet with terrible rapidity.

Lucy had invited Dolores Leon to be her bridesmaid. Dolores, happy in her betrothal to Martin Marshall, was glad to accept.

Owing to the dull season of the year, the wedding was to be a quiet one. Not more than twenty people were invited to the breakfast.

But the *trousseau* was none the less magnificent. The house was to be converted into a bower of costly bloom.

The wedding-dress came over the Channel from Paris.

Lucy, shy and blushing—though only her maid and Dolores were present in the maiden's chamber—tried it on two days before the wedding. The silvery sheen of the long satin robe inclosed her like a rose in moonlight. Her white neck and shoulders shamed the snowy satin. Her faultless complexion, the soft bloom of her cheek, the pure gold of her hair, the violet hue of her eyes, never showed to such perfection before.

"Come! You really *must* go down and give your father and lover a glimpse of you!" urged Dolores.

Lucy hung back, but finally yielded.

Her father was in the library. He gazed on the lovely vision with eyes of loving admiration sufficiently flattering to her charms.

"Where is Caryl, dear papa?"

"I believe he has gone out, my pet."

"Is there any one in the drawing-room?"

"I think not."

"Oh, then, Lucy," struck in Dolores, "you can go through the room and 'see yourself as others see you,' in the great mirror. Come!"

Lucy glided into the long drawing-room, and had advanced half-way through it before she was aware of a visitor, who had risen from his chair and was looking at her with flushed face and tears springing into his eyes.

It was Lord Hautboys.

She paused in great embarrassment.

He came toward her, took her hand, kissed it, stammered out that he wished her every earthly joy, and rushed out of the house.

"Poor fellow, I pity him!" murmured the bride-elect. "He cannot bear to see me in my wedding dress."

But she did not think many moments of Lord Hautboys; her thoughts rushed back to the man she was to marry—the man she so deeply loved—so passionately adored, that she would not have refused to die for him.

When we are happy we cannot sympathize with others' misery. Lucy was radiantly happy. She had put away all misgivings. If Caryl only felt affection of a calm kind for her, at least he would never love any other woman! She was safe in being nearer to him than any other. She would win him to love her dearly once she was his wife.

Before she had done looking at her lovely image in the mirror she had forgotten all about the little lord rushing despairingly away in the fog and drizzle of the dull day—next but one to her wedding-day!

"Next but one to her wedding-day?" So it was set down, as man proposes. It still may be that God will dispose otherwise.

There is a man going about London this gloomy, brief day, who is knotting up the last threads of such a network as the netted will struggle in vain to break through.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE BEAUTIFUL TEMPTRESS.

MADAME ST. CYR was sitting in the drawing-room of her new residence. It was the afternoon of the same day on which Lucy Crossley tried on her wedding-dress—a gray, drizzly, foggy, uncomfortable day, the last but one of the dismal month of September.

There was nothing dismal or uncomfortable about the lady or the drawing-room, however. The large oblong room was heated to a summer temperature and sweet with the odor of a large plate of English violets, roses and lilies of the valley. A fire, in the grate of polished steel inlaid with silver, had burned down to just that glow of solid incandescence which is the perfection of a fire. It gave a warm tone to the amber-and-gold hangings and furniture, the dado of ebonized wood, the beautiful painted ceiling, the fine pictures, and the world of dainty bric-a-brac, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, with which, in accordance to the demands of fashion, cabinets, tables, shelves and brackets were crowded.

In the mysterious region "below stairs" an elaborate dinner was in course of preparation; in the dining-room behind the library, a butler, gray-headed, quiet, the very personification of respectability, moved softly about, placing the flowers in the epergne, the wax candles in the candelabra, arranging the silver and crystal, admiring discreetly the new Japanese ware. The table was drawn in to its cosiest proportions and set for only two. My lady must be expecting a guest to dinner.

Madame St. Cyr, sitting a little way from the fire in the drawing-room—shielding her face from its glow with a hand-screen of Indian carving and the daintiest painted silk, dressed for dinner and awaiting the arrival of her guest—was a very handsome woman. Her rich, dark beauty had blossomed out into its fullest charm.

Now that her claims were conceded, the distant relative annihilated, the St. Cyr bank account passed to her credit, all her care and vexation of spirit vanished into the past, she had leisure to be beautiful. Not a line of trouble marked her smooth, low forehead, just above which, in the dusky meshes of her silken hair, a single costly ruby burned and sparkled like the soul of love. Her lovely arms, round and polished as if carved out of ivory, were bare to the shoulder. Her dress, of yellow silk covered with black lace, was cut high on the shoulders and low across the beautiful bust, and clung to the slight, full figure all the way down to the peeping slipper, from whence it twisted along the carpet like a shimmering snake.

Yes, Madame St. Cyr certainly looked very beautiful, for that style of beauty. It was mature and it was not modest.

Occasionally she could faintly hear the merry peal of her boy's laughter in the chamber overhead where he played with his good-natured governess.

It seemed as if she had everything in the world to complete her pleasure and happiness, except friends; and she meant to have them very soon. Wealth would buy flatterers. Her own charms should win her a lover.

"I must, I will win him away from that slip of a girl," she said to herself. "I want him, and I will have him."

She was thinking of Martin Marshall.

"I have found who she is—the daughter of a ruined merchant. She will have to beware of me! I have won the game, so far, and I intend to bring this about, with the rest. If I make a respectable marriage, now, all my past will be wiped out. I must marry Mr. Marshall.

"Mr. Jennings makes himself very disagreeable. He would like to bully me into marrying him! Mr. Jennings is an idiot. He ought to know enough to be afraid of me. Let him look out—it will be dangerous for him to interfere in my plans. If he is not satisfied with his two thousand pounds he will lose all."

"I wonder how Mr. Marshall will like me in this dress? Yellow is the mourning color of some countries; it is enough for me to wear black in public. At home, when he is coming, I must gratify my taste now and then. Ah, I hear some one in the hall. He must be coming! So early, too!"

The bloom of her cheek deepened, the diamond light of her liquid eyes brightened as she glanced toward the opening door; but both faded more quickly than they had come and she fairly grew pale with suppressed anger as the servant announced:

"Mr. Jennings."

The whilom parish-clerk came forward with a jaunty air.

He was dressed quite foppishly, and wore diamonds at his wrists and on his bosom. It was evident his fortunes had changed.

"How gorgeously madame has gotten herself up," he remarked, with impudent freedom.

"She's a stunner, no mistake! Ten to one, Madame St. Cyr, you are expecting a visit from that young West Indian."

"I certainly do expect him to dine with me. Did I not tell you, Mr. Jennings, that I would not be at liberty to attend to any business to-day?—that I had an engagement?"

"Just so. I came, for that very reason, to see who your engagement was with. I do not deny that I am jealous of this other fellow. I must ask you, my dear madame, to drop him."

"Drop him!"

"That was my expression, madame—short and sweet."

"I must say, I do not understand you, Mr. Jennings," with a disdainful smile.

"I mean, that I consider that you are promised to me—that you have allowed me to understand that, if we came out successful, you would marry me. I trust you do not intend to go back on your word."

"I assure you, sir, you must have entirely misunderstood me. I never had a thought of marriage with you. I have paid you two thousand pounds for your services, and consider the debt discharged."

"You are very cool about it, my lady! I'm not so easily gotten rid of! You will marry me or I will blow the whole affair."

He breathed hard and looked dangerous; but the handsome lady showed her white teeth in a smile as she answered:

"And get yourself into prison for forgery and conspiracy to defraud; put yourself out of all future benefits; make yourself poor as a church-mouse again. Fie! be reasonable, Mr. Jennings. I am willing to assure you a small annuity, or to add to the sum I have already paid you—but I am not and never will be willing to marry you. If you compelled me to it, I

should be a perfect shrew and scratch your eyes out. Be reasonable, my dear sir. Do not 'kill the goose that lays the golden egg.' We will be good friends, and I will find a pretty young wife for you who will not scratch out your eyes. Don't you think, on the whole, that will be best, Mr. Jennings?"

She smiled upon him with such perfect self-possession that he could only grin in return, half with rage, half with admiration.

"Think it over," she cried, gayly; "think it over, and come to-morrow and announce your conclusion. And now, farewell for to-day, my friend. I expect Mr. Marshall any moment."

"You will never land that fish," he answered her, spitefully; and then, as he did not care to meet the man they had spoken of, he withdrew from the house with a sneer on his face, and a feeling that his power over his beautiful *confidante* was not so great as he had meant it to be after all. He could only ruin her fortunes by ruining his own; and, for that, he was hardly prepared.

As he went down the steps he met young Marshall going up; but he had this to console him, after all—he was quite certain the young gentleman cared nothing for Madame St. Cyr.

This was true.

He came to her house unwillingly, for he was affianced to Dolores, and would have preferred being with her.

Madame St. Cyr received him with blushes and smiles:

"I wanted you to see my house," she said, as she shook hands with him. "I have so few friends to take an interest in me and mine. One cannot enjoy a beautiful home all alone. Come! I will take you over the house—there are a few moments before dinner to spare—and you shall admire or criticise as you feel disposed."

"There is little to criticise," he answered, glancing about him. "Let me congratulate you heartily, Mrs. St. Cyr, on this elegant home. I hope you have now arrived at such tranquillity and enjoyment as have not been yours in the last few years."

She sighed heavily as she murmured her thanks for his good wishes.

"Ah! Mr. Marshall, if one were not so lonely!"

"You have your child—is he well?"

"Very well. I have promised him he shall see you at dessert. The boy worships you, Mr. Marshall—you have stolen his heart completely—as you have his mother's," she added, in a whisper.

Martin started and blushed; but the diamond eyes had veiled themselves under the long, curling lashes, and he was not certain that he had really heard those words.

They passed on into the music-room and madame ran her slim fingers over the keys of the new piano.

"I wish you would not call me 'madame,'" she said, with charming pettishness, as she looked up in his face from her perch on the piano-stool. "It makes me feel like an old woman. Surely, we are good friends enough to warrant your calling me Juliet."

"When I was poor you took a kind interest in me; now I am rich you are not going to abandon me, are you?"

"Certainly not. I hope we are good friends—very good friends," he added, warmly, for the dark eyes looking up at him were, for the time being, irresistible.

"If you are ever in any trouble, or need money, or any aid I can give you, you will come to me, will you not?"—the low voice trembled and tears glittered on the dark eye-lashes; then, as if to conceal her emotion, she dashed off one of Strauss's waltzes.

Before she had finished the waltz, dinner was announced.

It was a dinner of many courses, with a new wine for each course, which his handsome hostess urged her visitor to try, rallying him on his abstinence, until Martin had drank many more glasses than he was accustomed to. His brain was not quite steady when they returned to the drawing-room at nine o'clock. It was the deliberate purpose of the enchantress to have it so, in the hope that he might say something to her which she could bring up afterward, as if he had proposed to her and she had accepted him.

Madame felt very happy and pleasant. It appeared to her, that evening, that Providence had forgotten that she was so bad—had ignored the evil of her life, and was going to smile upon her in spite of it.

Had Providence forgotten her wickedness?

There was a ring at the door-bell. Her new footman came in with a card on a salver.

"Oh, dear me, John! my orders were 'not at home' this evening."

"I know it, mum, but the gentleman insisted so, there was no getting rid o' him, mum."

She took up the card, smiling, and looked at it with some curiosity—"CAPTAIN FAYE."

"I do not know the gentleman," she murmured. Her flushed cheeks lost some of their color and she appeared startled.

She remembered that she had accused this Captain Faye's young daughter of murder, and she did not care to face the man.

"Tell him I am engaged!" she said.

"That will not do, madame," said a firm voice, and, looking up, she saw that a tall military gentleman had entered unbidden.

Behind him—like mummers at a masquerade—glided a dozen others, silently—men and women, who stood and looked at her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT STARES AN ADVENTURESS IN THE FACE.
MADAME ST. CYR turned very pale.

On the contrary, Martin Marshall blushed deeply—for he saw some whom he knew in that silent company.

He arose to his feet, staring and wondering.

The strange visitors formed a semicircle about Madame St. Cyr.

The military gentleman stood before her, tall, threatening—there was something in the glittering eyes with which he held her from which she could no more break than the wedding-guest from that of the Ancient Mariner, though her heart thumped wildly and a deadly chill took hold of brain and soul.

Still she strove for self-possession. With a desperate effort she tore her eyes from the steely ones which held them, forcing a mocking smile as she looked about on the intruders.

"Is it what they call a Surprise?" she asked, but her tones were husky and broken.

"I came to give you the sketch of a woman's life, madame. It may weary you, but you must hear it out. The name of this woman was—and is—Juliet Fleury; her country, France; her parents, a Parisian grisette and an English gambler. For the past few years, off and on, she was the dissolute companion of Harley St. Cyr. She never was his wife."

Here madame threw up her hand in remonstrance, but the firm voice of the captain went on uninterruptedly:

"By some means she came into possession of the facts that his uncle in the East Indies was rich, in poor health, and that St. Cyr would be his heir. She then tried to persuade the man, whose mistress she had so long been, to marry her. He refused. He even laughed at her. Juliet Fleury was not amiable and she was revengeful. She was ambitious, too. She formed a plan to murder her lover and come forth as his wife when the uncle died. The plan showed cunning. She went first to a country church remote from the place where St. Cyr was and—set that church on fire."

A violent wave of color rushed over the madame's handsome face; she stamped her foot and sent forth two little words from between her clenched teeth:

"You lie!"

"Her object was, to burn the records, so that when she testified to having been married in that church, there would be no possibility of disproving her statement, the clergyman whom she stated had performed the ceremony being dead."

"Unfortunately, for herself, she dropped her gold pencil-case in the church-yard. In the body of that pencil-case was one of St. Cyr's notes, refusing her offer of marriage."

Here the pitiless narrator paused for a few seconds, as if even he was moved by the sight of the green and livid hue which crept over the beautiful features before him; but he soon went on:

"From that church in Cresswell, which she left in ruins, she went straight to Cliff village, in the vicinity of Cliff Castle, where St. Cyr had gone for a few days. She arrived in the night, kept herself out of sight of people, and, in the morning, sought the beach where her lover was in the habit of walking.

"She found him there, approached him rapidly from behind, fired the fatal shot and fled.

"There are always weak points in the best laid plans of criminals. A weak point in this Juliet Fleury's plan was the hiring of an old fisherman on the beach to take her in his boat to a point where she could meet the little steamer which touched at the port below. She did not cease her flight until her foot touched an American pier, which it did, ten days later. In the United States she lay *perdu*, awaiting a time when it would be safe to appear in this country with all the appearance of having been across the Atlantic when the foul deed was done.

"She knew, very well, that a young lady, pure as the lilies that bloom in Eden, had been suspected and accused of the murder. Did she pity this innocent victim of her own crimes, whose heart was wrung, whose reason tottered, under the crushing knowledge that she was accused? No. Rather, she laughed in her sleeve at those circumstances which threatened the innocent, since thus her own safety was the more assured. To murder a young girl in mind, and prospects, and hopes, to wreck the happiness of a family, did not make her quail who planned and committed the assassin's deed which killed the man she had professed to love.

"Again, it came to the thought of this Juliet Fleury, when she saw that her wicked hopes were in a fair way of being realized, that it might be dangerous to leave alive the kindly old fisherman who had taken her in his boat that morning of St. Cyr's death. So, she steals back in the night, not long ago, and puts an eternal quietus on him: he is found dead in his bed; and again, the hand of a just Providence silently interferes, and she leaves on the floor, beside the humble bed of the poor old murdered fisherman, this jewel. Do you recognize it, madame?"

He held out the little ornament in the full light of the brightly illuminated room. The fascinated gaze of the unhappy woman turned slowly from his eyes to the jewel.

The green tinge on her face had settled into an ashen gray. Involuntarily she put up her white hand to her mouth as if to repress the shriek that faintly gurgled forth.

"I need not go into an elaborate detail, madame, of all the arts practiced by this adventuress to secure her claims on the St. Cyr estate, for herself and child. I will only mention that—fearing the destruction of the marriage record would be too non-positive in its character, she employed a certain Jennings, of Cresswell—a clerk, well-fitted, by his talents as a copyist, for the task—to doctor a scorched and smoke-blackened page of the church-books in such a manner as to make appear there a cunning forgery of a record of a marriage which never took place. This Jennings is already under arrest. The particulars of these small things will appear when Juliet Fleury is tried for murder."

Almost before he ceased, the false madame, with one glance of despair at the motionless figures about her, cast herself down on the carpet at his feet and clasping his knees, lifted up a haggard countenance, and murmured:

"Mercy! mercy! I beg for mercy, Captain Faye! Ah! I am but a weak, frightened woman, after all! Do not let them put me in prison! Do not let them hang me! Oh, my God, do not set the officers on me! I will go away. I will never more be seen. I will lead a good life—will never again harm so much as a worm. I will go to the nuns and learn to become holy, as they are. Have mercy on me, good Captain Faye!" and she shuddered woefully.

"I might have shown you an unwarrantable mercy—for my heart is full of chivalry for the sex you have disgraced—but you showed none for my poor child. Nay, Cicely! not a word! Do not pity the pitiless. This woman is worse than the worst man, and she must endure the penalty she has brought upon herself. I might as well loosen a tiger as give her the power to go on in her ways."

He unclasped her clinging arms from his knees and stepped back, but she crawled along the floor and crouched at his feet, moaning and begging:

"Give me time to get away! Let me fly! Do not let the officers get hold of me! Ah! I shall be hanged!"

"Father, if she will really go into a nunnery will you not let her go?"

Cicely stood by her father, had hold of his hands. Tears fell down from her sweet eyes over her pale, lovely face.

A pair of eager, burning, passionate eyes watched her every look and motion—the eyes of Sir Caryl Crossley, summoned by the indignant captain to witness the vindication of his darling daughter. A torrent of long-restrained love rushed over that repentant heart—a sense of his cruelty to Cicely, his causeless jealousy and bitter accusations—until it seemed to him that he would die unless he poured out his confession at her feet and won her to look at him with kind eyes. He forgot that he was almost a married man—that to-morrow he was to stand before the altar with his blue-eyed cousin, who even now was wondering as she waited for him at his long absence on the evening preceding the bridal day.

Cicely, quite herself—Cicely, entirely vindicated—Cicely ten thousand times more beautiful than ever, stood there before him, while the keen memory of all the hateful things he had said to her, thought of her, rushed over him in

a tide which forced him to catch his breath.

"One more thing I have to say to you, Juliet Fleury," continued the captain to the guilty creature at his feet; "one more thing, before I bring in the officers who wait outside on your doorstep. Harley St. Cyr assured you—in that note which you carried about with you in your pencil-case—that he had married. That statement of his was true. Perhaps you already know it. He beguiled a mere schoolgirl into a secret marriage, she being heiress to a great fortune. But, her father lost the splendid fortune St. Cyr coveted, and he never claimed his girlish bride. Nevertheless, she was his legal wife, and is now heir to the estate, or her third of it, which you have appropriated. I would fain respect her delicacy and join with her in keeping her ill-starred romance from the world; but the full vindication of my own daughter demands that I proclaim the truth. My poor Cicely's faithful, heroic friendship for her schoolmate entangled her in a seeming intimacy with St. Cyr, whom she despised. Señor Leon,"—turning courteously to that gentleman, who was one of the group—"you cannot blame me for declaring your daughter's marriage, since thus only can I make the full innocence of my own dear girl appear!"

"Dolores has told me everything," murmured Leon, "and I can only wonder at Miss Cicely's forbearance. If I had known of it, believe me, Captain Faye, I should long ago have dragged the truth to the light, however my own feelings may have suffered. Thank Heaven, it is no worse! Thank Heaven, the scoundrel is dead, and that my child still has a prospect of happiness!" He looked over at Martin as he uttered the last two sentences.

That young gentleman, thoroughly sobered by the tragic nature of his surroundings, walked over to where Dolores and her father were standing, raised the slim hand of his betrothed to his lips and kissed it.

The wild, imploring eyes of the woman at whose feast he had sat that night followed him as he moved, and took note of the loving action. There were dark rings gathering about her own eyes—over them was coming the film of an agony that had better have been death; but, as the bruised serpent makes an expiring effort to sting, so she, dragging herself to her feet, smiled on Dolores, and said:

"I wish you joy of my cast-off lover, Mrs. St. Cyr. I shall not need him after I am hanged—and—and, he will get the money, either way! It is well to have two strings to one's bow."

"You are venomous but harmless, madam," said Captain Faye. "And now, you, man there at the door, bring your mistress a cloak, else she will shiver, with these bare shoulders, on her way to prison, this rainy night."

At these stern words madame shrunk and paled and shuddered, in her jewels and her gleaming satin dress, like a light in a golden candlestick which is wavering to extinction. It was pitiful—most pitiful to see her; though she was wicked to the core and offensive to the moral sense—she was still a woman, young, handsome, and so utterly helpless in her downfall that she appealed to their compassion.

"Oh," have some mercy upon me," she cried again. "Tell me! do the officers of the law yet know of my crime? Ah! if you have not yet denounced me, give me some chance!"

"You gave Harley St. Cyr no chance to save himself."

"Let me go from this house alone, in the night, without a dollar, without a friend. Let me run the gauntlet on the bare chance of my life. Of course they will find me—the police will soon hunt me down. Give me that small chance. Have mercy upon me!"

"You had no mercy on the poor old fisherman."

"Ah, my God! what a heart of stone you have! You speak for me!—you tell him—he is your father and will listen to you—how shameful it will be to hang a woman! He will never sleep soundly after he has done that. Tell him so—you—you—you! You pity me, Miss Faye, I see it in your eyes. You will speak for me"—she was down at Cicely's feet, her wan face hidden in the girl's pure robes.

"Father," faltered Cicely, "let her go. Remember what the New Testament says—'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

"God bless you," murmured the woman at her feet—"God give you the dearest wish of your heart!"

Unconsciously Cicely, as she heard these words, turned her eyes to the eager, kindling face of Sir Caryl. Then she dropped them, for there was a brightness in his regard which was unbearable. She did not forget, though he did,

that he was to be married to his cousin on the morrow.

Captain Faye's stern countenance changed as the wretched sinner continued to cling to his daughter.

"I have no right to connive at your escape, woman," he said. "But you shall not be taken out in the rainy night in that dress. Go, change it."

Madame started to her feet and hurried from the room.

"Are you doing right, captain?" queried the senor.

"Oh, yes! papa is right," hastily answered Cicely, for her father. Then she stood there for the next few moments glancing down, so as not to meet the look which Sir Caryl still fixed on her—that intense look of longing, remorse, joy, love, strangely blended in one flaming ray.

"Tell the madame to come down," ordered the captain, of a staring servant, after three or four minutes had elapsed.

The madame was not in the house.

None of those who had intruded on her pleasant drawing-room, expected that she would be in the house.

"Call a police-officer," thundered Captain Faye.

But all understood that he had given Juliet Fleury, the adventuress, that much chance for her miserable life.

On going to the door the gentlemen found that she had well improved her opportunity—the cab in which Señor Leon and his daughter had arrived being gone, hired by the fugitive to take her more rapidly from the scene of her discomfiture and deadly danger.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WAY THEY SETTLED IT.

LUCY was alone in her father's library waiting the return of Sir Caryl. Her sleepy blue eyes were drowsed under golden lashes, her fair head bent on one lily hand; her heart beat to a low, sweet music of its own. She was weary with the excitement of the day, but she was happy. At length, after long soreness of heart and many woundings of spirit, she had settled down to the pleasant conviction that Caryl was learning to love her. He had been kinder to her in these sweet, swift days that preceded the wedding-day.

She was faintly smiling over thoughts of what he had said to her in the morning, dreamily wondering what kept him out so late, and sleepily musing over memories of the becomingness of the bridal dress, when she heard the slumbering footman in the hall arouse himself to admit Sir Caryl.

Lucy sat up erect and rubbed her eyes; the color flew to her fair cheeks and a happy smile to her lips, as her betrothed came into the library, paused in the middle of the floor, and stood and looked at her.

Then an exclamation of terror broke from her, for Caryl was frightfully pale, and had the distraught air of a madman. His hair clung to his forehead wet with the dew of suffering.

"To-morrow we are to be married, are we not, Lucy?"

"Yes, dear Caryl. Oh, what is the matter with you? You frighten me."

"There is nothing the matter with me, cousin. Do I look as if there was? That is not strange, for I witnessed an exciting scene to-night. They have discovered the true murderer of St. Cyr, and I saw her. Who do you think it is?"

"Not—not—Miss Faye?"

"Miss Faye! Cicely Faye! that angel from Heaven! Take care what you say, Lucy! That child has been cruelly martyred—oh, how wrongly, how cruelly suspected! It was that impostor who set up to be his wife, who got possession of his property—that French madame. Lucy, you must have a strangely suspicious mind to think of Miss Faye—"

"It was you who taught me to suspect her," cried poor Lucy. "And now that you find she is innocent, I suppose you are in love with her again, and come to me to free you!" and she burst into tears.

"Lucy! Why do you talk so? Why do you—"

"Because it is true, and you cannot deny it! You are wretched, now, because you cannot marry your 'angel from Heaven.' You come to me, you show me your pale, unhappy face, you let me see what is in your thoughts. You might better ask me at once to break off with you. I'm sure I don't want to marry you if you don't want me to!" another flood of tears.

"I have always confessed that you were not my first choice, Lucy. But I shall be a good husband to you. I am a man of honor—"

"You are not, cousin Caryl. You did not treat Miss Faye honorably—you have not treat-

ed me honorably. You have made both of us miserable. I, for one, have been a fool long enough. I will not marry you now, sir, if you get down on your knees and beg me to."

"It is too late for such tantrums, my dear cousin—"

"No, thank God, it is not too late! This time to-morrow it would have been. Now, if I ever marry a man, he will have to tease me harder than ever you have done, cousin! I will wed the man who loves me, rather than the man I love. Keep your white face, and your woe-be-gone aspect for some other bride. I will not consent to make you miserable."

There was a flash of fire from a pair of blue eyes, a lovely, flushed face shone before him an instant and was gone.

"I never dreamed she had so much spirit! But, she will be all over her resentment in the morning, and ready to kiss me in greeting. Poor Lucy! it is true I have treated you as if there were no honor in me. And Cicely! ah, great Heaven! I see no way out of this trouble but to cut my own throat."

He stumbled up-stairs to his room with an expression on his countenance which would have alarmed his friends, had there been any present to see.

No sleep came to him that night, but, more than once, a pistol was pressed to his temple and his hand toyed with the trigger.

However, daylight came, and Sir Caryl was not yet a suicide. Then he put away the weapon he had not been rash enough to use, flung himself on the bed and fell into a sort of stupor.

In a couple of hours his servant aroused him with:

"Time to dress, sir. Rain cleared away, and as 'andsome a day to be married in, Sir Caryl, as ever a lord could wish. 'Ere's a bit o' breakfast an' a cup o' strong tea to keep you up till the wedding-breakfast, sir."

Caryl's head was heavy, and his eyes dim and bloodshot. He drank the tea and took a cold bath, after which he did not appear quite so much like a sick man or a dissipated one.

The officious valet, all smiles and alertness, dressed his master for the important occasion, wondering, inwardly, at the bridegroom's indifference to his toilet.

Would Lucy really make good her threat of the previous night? Caryl did not believe it; still, his heavy heart gave a great throb as he, at last, passed out into the corridor, to meet her soon in the rooms below.

He found Sir John, in high spirits, but restless, wandering about from room to room.

"Why, how pale you are, my boy! Bless my soul! You are not scared, are you?" and the old baronet laughed good-naturedly.

It seemed an age to the bridegroom before the slow hands of the clocks about the house reached a quarter to eleven.

Lucy had gotten over her anger; for all the preparations were going on; and now the carriages stood before the door, and there was a soft rustle of satin on the stairs; and down swept the bride, very pale—paler than the groom—but so calm and sweet and lovely that Caryl's heart, albeit well-nigh rent in twain by its own misery, softened as he looked upon her, and he went up to her and kissed her rose-leaf cheek while she gave him a faint, strange smile.

The invited guests were to go to church first, coming, after the ceremony, to the wedding-breakfast. Only two or three besides the family came first to the house, and these were all relatives, with the exception of Lord Hautboys.

It struck Caryl that it was hardly in good taste to torment the unfortunate little lord by making him a witness to his rival's happiness (?) He made no remark, however, and the Hautboys' elegant equipage took its place in the little procession which whirled rapidly away, and soon drew up before the fashionable church of the neighborhood.

Sir Caryl grew colder and whiter as the carriage in which he was stopped before the church doors.

When he entered the vestibule the bride's party was already there, having arrived a few moments earlier.

Summoning all his courage Sir Caryl glanced again at the bride. He did not know that she had the possibility of blossoming into such splendid beauty. Her eyes were like sun-confronting sapphires, her cheeks softly colored, her whole expression modest and grave but full of spirit and animation.

"If I had not loved Cicely first I might have adored this sweet cousin," thought the bridegroom, as he approached her.

Just then, some people, late in arriving, passed through the vestibule into the crowded

church. Sir Caryl started and began to tremble. Captain Faye and his daughter had come to witness this marriage.

He stood stock-still; his eyes were on the pavement; it seemed to him as if this world and the things thereof were slipping away from him—he remained in a sort of trance.

"Come!" said some one in a cheerful voice, taking him by the elbow, "come! or you will be too late to witness the ceremony."

It was one of the relatives who thus urged him. He started from his dream, looking wildly about him. Lucy was not there—nor Sir John—nor any but himself and this friend.

"Where are they?" he murmured, not half comprehending.

"They have all gone up to the altar. As soon as the music ceases the ceremony will commence."

"What ceremony? Where is Lucy?"

The grand organ ceased to roll forth the sweet measure of the Wedding March, and the friend made answer:

"Being married to Lord Hautboys."

Sir Caryl stared as if his eyes would come out of his head.

"Did you not know?" asked the relative, puzzled. "The change in the programme was announced at the house an hour before we left. Has she given you the mitten, old boy?"

"Yes," answered Sir Caryl, loudly, adding, under his breath, "Thank God!"

The Court Circular ventured to print a spicy comment on Miss Crossley's "change of heart." There was not lacking the usual speculation, gossip, and even scandal, so pleasant when anything occurs out of the usual run of human events; but the opinion finally settled upon and maintained by the majority was, that Lord Hautboys and Lucy Crossley had been madly in love with each other for some time—that the lady had wearied of her engagement to her cousin and told him so after the cards were out, when he magnanimously yielded up his claims, helping her to form the little plot by which the world was to be surprised, and which was so successfully carried out.

Lord and Lady Hautboys went to Italy for the winter. Sir Caryl was pitied and laughed at. He bore up bravely under his embarrassments; and it may be that he quietly gave to gossip the turn it finally took, which made him the disappointed one and his fair cousin a heroine with two devoted lovers, one of whom she was obliged, of course, to throw over.

At the same time that the fashionable world was exercised over the conduct of Lucy, the whole of London, and of England, too, fashionable or otherwise, was surprised and excited over the strange termination to the St. Cyr murder affair.

Officers were out in every part of the kingdom, and over in Paris, in search of the artful and wicked adventuress who had come so near to a glittering success, only to be driven to flight and concealment and utter ruin; but nothing was discovered to betray her hiding-place. The whole terrible romance was augmented in its interest by the fact of St. Cyr's clandestine marriage with Señor Leon's beautiful young daughter, who had now, really against her will, thrust into her hands her third of her dead husband's large fortune.

These things furnished talk for more than the traditional nine days which are supposed to wear out the most wonderful wonder.

Winter and spring fled on, as all seasons of time will do.

It was understood that Sir Caryl Crossley had retired to Cliff Castle to brood over his disappointment in love.

Sir Caryl was indeed at the castle, living the life of a hermit, having no amusement other than pacing the sea-sands or lying stretched out in Boffin's Bower hours at a time.

Meantime, the Rookery, not far away, bloomed into that rich beauty of which the place was capable in summer.

Again a full moon flooded the rose-scented piazza with the splendor of its June radiance. June lilies and honeysuckles blent their odors with that of the roses. Again the sound of the piano and merry voices came from the rooms of the Rookery, and the shadows of dancers fell across the muslin window-drapery; for happiness had returned to the afflicted household in knowing the shadow had fallen from their darling and left her brighter, better, sweeter, lovelier than before.

Again, in a soft white dress, with a red rose twined in her dark locks, Cicely paced the moonlit veranda—not alone. Some one walked

by her side, with eager face bent down to hers and quick, pleading, earnest words, such as no woman can listen to unmoved, pouring their passionate meaning in her ear.

Cicely looked up with a bewitching smile—

"You are sure—absolutely sure—that you will never again be unreasonably jealous?"

"I swear it, Cicely. Never, never! I have had my lesson."

"Then I cannot refuse to forgive you."

"Nor to love me, Cicely?"

"I may learn to love you again, by slow degrees. Mind! I do not promise!" still with the teasing smile, which was changed to a rosy blush as she found herself caught and held to a loud-throbbing heart.

"Do not give me a chance to doubt you again, dear Cicely. We have been miserable long enough; let us be happy now. Be my wife, darling, as soon as ever it can be. Do not keep me waiting for a grand wedding. My castle is in order, and you can come and be its sweet mistress some summer day not far away. I am as impatient as ever, I fear. Yet, truly, Cicely, I will be gentle and tender as man can be when you are my wife."

Well, Lord Hautboys's unselfish devotion had its reward!

Lady Hautboys grew so fond of her husband that she could meet her cousin Caryl, when he brought his wife to see her, without a blush or sigh.

"I can never thank you enough for making me angry with you, cousin," she whispered him in an aside; "I am the happiest woman in the world!"

"And I am the happiest man, Lucy!" and Lady Cicely, seeing them with a secret between them, looked over at the two and smiled.

THE END.

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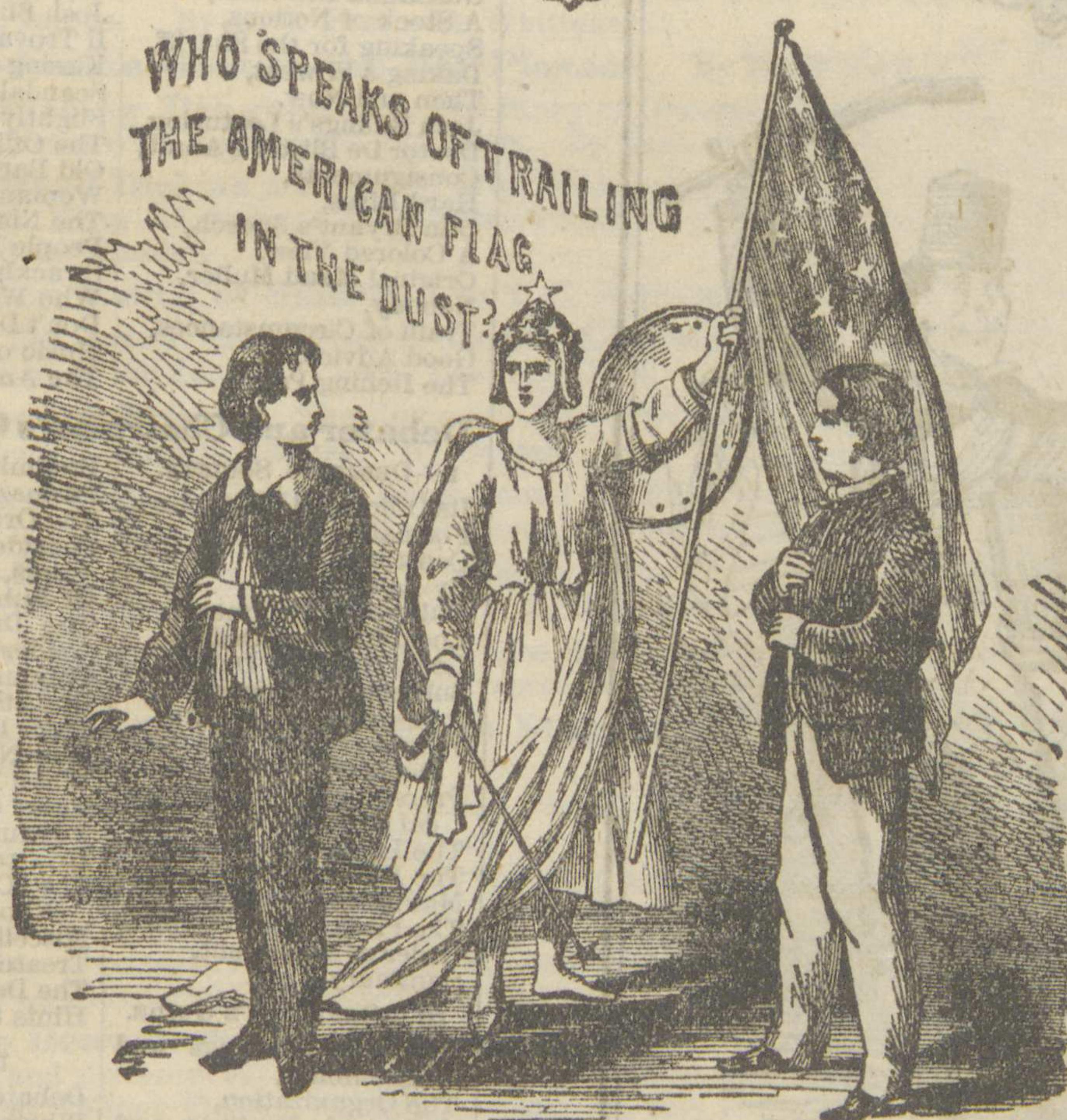
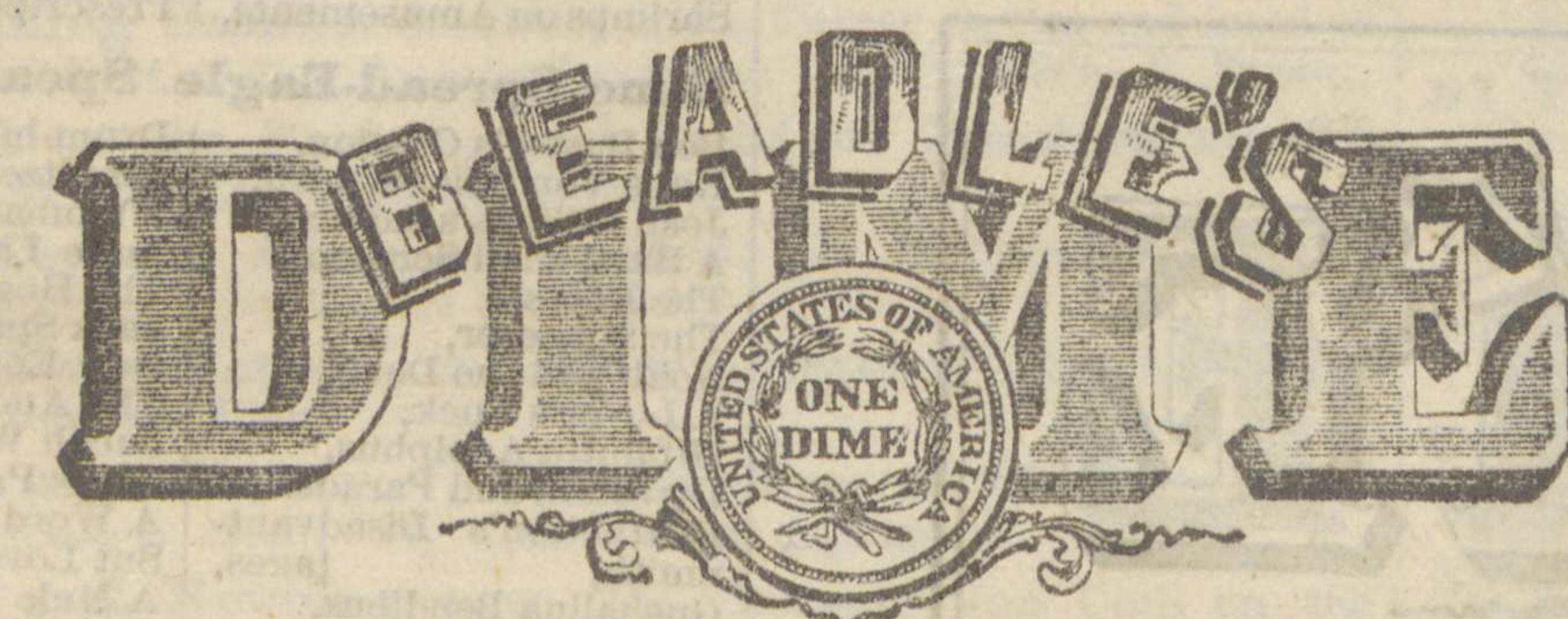
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The Genius of Liberty. Two males and one female.
Cinderella, or, the Little Glass Slipper.
Doing Good and Saying Bad. For several characters.

The Golden Rule. For two males and two females.
The Gift of the Fairy Queen. For several females.
Taken in and Done for. For two characters.
Country Aunt's Visit to the City. Several characters.
The Two Romans. For two males.
Trying the Characters. For three males.
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The Rainbow. For several characters.
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A Connubial Eclogue.
The Public Meeting. For five males and one female.
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The Gentle Cook. For two males.
Masterpiece. For two males and two females.
The Two Romans. For two males.
The Same. Second Scene. For two males.
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The Battle Call. A Recitative. For one male.



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The May. A Floral Fancy. For six little girls.
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Honor to Whom Honor is Due. 7 males and 1 female.
The Gentle Client. Several males and one female.
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A Scene from "Paul Pry." For four males.
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The Right way. A Colloquy. For two boys.
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The Crimes of Dress. A Colloquy. For two boys.
The Reward of Benevolence. For four males.
The Letter. For two males.

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The Eta Pi Society. For five boys and a teacher.
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Poetry Run Mad,
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Scientific Lectures,
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The Codfish,
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The Features' Quarrel,
Hamerican Voodchuck,
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The March to Moscow,
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Scandalous,
Slightly Mixed,
The Office-seeker,
Old Bachelors,
Woman,
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People Will Talk,
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Who Wouldn't be Fire'n,
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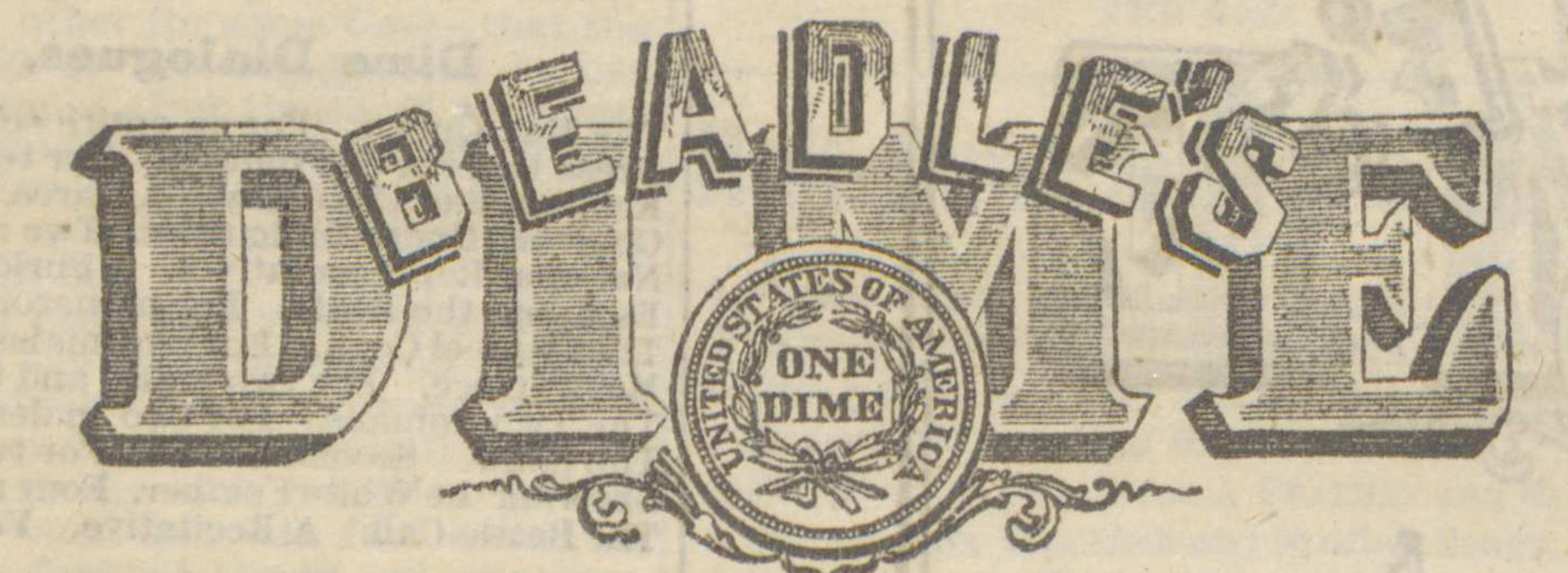
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Local Rules of Debate,
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The Rhetoric of Debate,
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The Preliminary Premise,
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Summary.

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Order of Business and
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The "Question." How to
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Rights of a Speaker as
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Interrupting a Vote,
Organization of Deliberative
Bodies, Conventions,
Annual or General Assemblies.

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